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TESTIMONIES of
Laymen To Religion.

TO THE TRUTHS

OF NATURAL AND REVEALED
RELIGION,

EXTRACTED FROM THE

WORKS OF DISTINGUISHED LAYMEN.



BY THE

REV. JAMES BREWSTER,

11

MINISTER OF CRAIG, AND AUTHOR OF "LECTURES ON
CHRIST'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT."

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TESTIMONY

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TO
THE REVEREND
SIR H. MONCREIFF WELLWOOD,

BARONET,

THIS VOLUME

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

WITH SENTIMENTS OF HIGH ESTEEM,

AND WITH A SENSE OF MANY OBLIGATIONS,

BY

HIS FAITHFUL HUMBLE SERVANT,

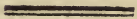
THE AUTHOR.

HE, who collects, is laudably employed ; for, though he exerts no great talents in the work, he facilitates the progress of others ; and, by making that easy of attainment, which is already written, may give some mind more vigorous, or more adventurous than his own, leisure for new thoughts and original designs.

Dr. Samuel Johnson.

Facile est autem docere, pene universam veritatem, per philosophorum sectas esse divisam. Non enim philosophiam sic nos evertimus, ut Academici solent, quibus ad omnia respondere propositum est, quod est potius calumniari et illudere. Sed docemus, nullam sectam fuisse tam deviam, nec philosophorum quenquam tam inanem, qui non viderit aliquid ex vero.—Quod si extitisset aliquis, qui veritatem sparsam per singulos, per sectasque diffusam, colligeret in unum, et redigeret in corpus, is profecto non dissentiret a nobis. *Lactantii Institutiones, lib. viii. c. 7.*

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INTRODUCTION.

THE plan of the following compilation was first suggested to my mind, about ten years ago, when I had occasion to call the attention of a young friend (with whose religious education I had been entrusted) to the serious study of the Christian faith; and, in order to recommend the subject more effectually to his consideration, had begun to adduce the religious opinions of various distinguished individuals in public life, and in the annals of literature. In preparing to note down, for his use, a few references to the recorded sentiments of these eminent characters, there occurred in their writings so many impressive testimonies to the great principles of revealed religion, that I was insensibly led to conceive the design of arranging a selection of these passages for the press. In the course of collecting extracts for this purpose, I contemplated, at one time, a much more extensive work than the present; and conceived the practicability of tracing, through the wide range of modern literature, the decided homage which has been render-

ed to the claims of religion, by the most prominent names in the various departments of polite learning, and scientific research. But I very soon discovered, that this was an undertaking, which required a larger portion of leisure, and a readier access to books, as well as a greater variety of acquirements, than what I was able to bring to the task. I was, therefore, constrained to limit my labours to the small number of authors more immediately within my reach. Even in this narrow field, the materials have been so abundant, that it has become necessary to abridge very much the original plan; and the present volume scarcely comprises one half of what had been transcribed for publication, or marked for extraction. I do not make this remark for the sake of magnifying my own diligence; but merely for the purpose of shewing, how small a proportion this compilation bears to the mass of similar testimonies, which might be gathered and assorted even in a very limited circle of study. I have restricted my views, therefore, to the instruction of those, who have but newly entered on the paths of knowledge, or who have no means of pursuing them far; and, excluding all the more abstruse and lengthened discussions which fell in my way, I have selected only those passages, which seemed most adapted for general use, or most applicable to youthful readers. The volume contains nothing, that can be new to persons of extensive reading; and all the service which it can pretend to render them, is that of calling to their recollection, and bringing within their reach, what they may remember to have perused, and may not

be unwilling to reconsider. The present publication, in short, is nothing more than a specimen of what may be executed to better purpose, and to greater extent, by those who are placed in situations more favourable for such researches. It is a contribution comparatively trivial—a mite cast into the armoury of Christian truth. But the compiler of these pages will be well pleased to make such an exhibition of his poverty, provided he may be instrumental in stimulating others to bring forward a richer offering out of their abundance.

The extracts, here given, are neither restricted to a mere statement of the opinion of every particular author from whom they are taken, which would have proved a very dry detail; nor are they so far extended as to present a full exposition of that author's sentiments on the subject to which they refer, which would have occupied too great a space in the compass of one volume; but such passages have been chosen, as might at once indicate the opinion of each writer, and furnish, at the same time, some useful argument or illustration, on the topic under discussion. Neither are these passages presented to the reader, as always conveying the most complete and most scriptural views of the truths, to which they refer; but only as favourable, in their general tenour, to the great principles of religion. As it was not so much my object to establish particular points of doctrine, as to confirm the leading principles of the Christian faith, hence it will be found, that quotations are sometimes brought forward in support of these principles, from the advocates of very opposite systems in philosophy and theology. But whenever

this occurs; when a citation, for instance, is made from the pages of Euler, in vindication of prayer, on the scheme of philosophical free-will, and another from the pages of Hartley, on the principle of philosophical necessity, the conclusion meant to be deduced from these concurring testimonies, is not the truth of this or that author's mode of explanation, but the testimony given by both, on their respective systems, to the importance of devotional duties.

The passages, here brought together, it may also be proper to observe, are of two very different descriptions; the one class consisting of the concessions of deistical writers, and the other containing the testimonies of avowed believers in Christianity. It was once intended to have distributed them in separate divisions. But this plan, besides having an invidious appearance, would have been attended with various inconveniences; and, particularly, would have required a complete repetition of nearly the same heads of chapters and sections. With regard to the arrangement of the extracts, as they now stand, it will be obvious, that their place in the volume was necessarily regulated by the principal subject, on which they touched; and that it would have been impossible, without greatly mangling a passage, and weakening its impression, or even altering its import, to have excluded every sentence, which referred to other topics. Many of these passages, therefore, might have been placed, with almost equal propriety, under different titles or sections; but it is hoped, that they are in general so distributed, as to carry on a series of illustrations,

and to form as natural a connexion, in a sort of system, as detached portions of different works could well be expected to preserve.

These passages, it ought also to be noticed, are not generally taken from publications exclusively devoted to religious subjects, except in the case of a few authors, whose works are not commonly known, or easily accessible; and there are many of the ablest and most valuable writers on the evidences, doctrines, and duties of the Christian religion, from whom very few, and others from whom no, extracts have been made; partly because their sentiments are sufficiently indicated by the mere titles of their respective publications, and partly because it would have required a number of volumes to contain the ample arguments and illustrations, which these works would have afforded. In order, in some measure, to remedy this unavoidable omission, the reader is referred to a list of a select number of the more valuable and accessible of these lay-authors, who have treated almost exclusively on some religious subject, and whose works may deserve an entire perusal. It will be obvious, from a slight inspection of this brief catalogue*, that a very complete and correct exposition of Christian doctrines, as well as the most powerful and persuasive exhortations to Christian duties, might easily be compiled from the writings of eminent laymen, and expressed entirely in their own language.

But where, it may be asked, is the peculiar good purpose to be promoted by these extracts from lay-authors, and from the perusal of their works on re-

* See page xxii.

ligious subjects, farther than their own merits may warrant? Is the truth of any religion, or religious tenet, to rest on the mere authority of great names; and are we to count voices to determine our belief? To this question, which, indeed, brings to the proof the utility of the present publication, I would briefly reply, in the words of a philosopher, pre-eminently qualified to direct the most legitimate and conclusive mode of argumentation. “I am well aware, “that authorities are not arguments; but when a “prejudice, to which authority alone has given currency, is to be combated, what other refutation is “likely to be effectual *?”

The truth of Christianity, especially, does not rest upon any human authority; nor does it require the aid of any names, however distinguished, to recommend its excellencies, provided that mankind would come, with unbiassed minds, to the examination of its sacred claims. But let it be recollected, that, besides the power of a depraved nature, exciting, in the hearts of men, an aversion to all the restraints of religion, an indifference to its most earnest expostulations, and a readiness to embrace every plea that might justify this aversion and neglect; there is a disposition sufficiently prevalent, especially among the half-learned, to exalt the energy of human reason, as adequate for every case of their duty; to reject the aid of revelation, as altogether unnecessary in the world; to ridicule its humiliating tenets, as utterly irrational in their nature, as

* Stewart's Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind, ii. 469.

well as injurious in their tendency ; and to despise the serious belief of their heavenly origin, or of their importance to man, as nothing less than the characteristic of a timid spirit, a feeble intellect, or a melancholy temperament. They have rashly assumed the position, that reason and genius, learning and science, knowledge of life and intrepidity of character, are all arranged on the adverse side to genuine Christianity * ; and they have entrenched themselves in this conviction, by the authority and example of persons who have united, in their character, many of the above qualities, with the disbelief of revealed religion, with hostility to its influ-

* “ We have so often seen, in our days, weakness united to a large portion of virtue, that we have been accustomed to believe in the energy of immorality.” “ The German philosophers,” this writer adds, (and her words may be considered as certifying the general testimony, rendered by the learned laity in that country to the principles of religion ;)—“ the German philosophers, and let them receive the glory of the deed, have been the first in the eighteenth century, who have ranged free-thinking on the side of faith, genius on the side of morality, and character on the side of duty.”—*De Stael's Germany*, iii. 256.

A publication at Paris in 1816, of which I have seen only the title ; viz. “ *Les Apologistes Involontaires ; ou, la Religion Chretienne prouvée et defendue par les écrits de philosophes*,” seems to intimate, that similar testimonies may be drawn from the literature of that country.

But the idea of adducing the concessions of adversaries, and the testimonies of unbiassed judges, in support of revealed religion, is of a more ancient date, than to admit of any modern author laying claim to the invention. “ *Sed omittamus sane testimonia prophetarum, ne minus idonea probatio videatur esse ab his quibus non creditur. Veniamus ad auctores, et eos ipsos ad veri probationem citemus, quibus contra nos uti solent.*”—*Lactantii Institutiones*, lib. i. cap. 1.

ence, or at least with a disregard of its injunctions. Now, this is nothing less than disbelieving, or, at least, justifying disbelief, on the ground of human *authority*, and from submission to great names; and this is a prejudice so inveterate and irrational, that it can be combated only on its own principles.

There is no want, indeed, of irrefragable argument, in defence of Christianity, from many professional teachers of its truths, who may be justly ranked in the highest class of human authorities, in respect of genius, learning, and intellect*. But the anti-religious prepossession, in question, extends, in all its antipathy, to the clerical advocates of divine truth, however eminent in human attainments; and all their appeals in its behalf are stigmatized and turned aside, as the mere dictates of personal interest, or of professional prejudice. There might be some meaning (whatever there might be of truth) in this jealousy of ecclesiastical authors, if they were merely uttering dogmas *ex cathedra*, or offering testimonies in the character of witnesses; in which cases, they might be conceived to speak under the strong bias of education, or the secret bribery of self-interest; but, in as far as they place the points at issue upon the ground of fair argument, and challenge an examination of the evidences which they adduce, or the reasonings which they advance, it matters nothing to the decision of the question, what profes-

* "The celebrated men produced by the church" (meaning, probably, the church of Rome, but equally true of Protestant communities) "form nearly two-thirds of the distinguished characters in modern times."—*Chateaubriand's Beauties of Christianity*, iii. 153.

sional office the authors may bear, or whether it be known at all who the authors have been. The discussion stands upon its own merits. The nature of the argument, and not the name of the author, is to be considered. And no man, who appeals to reason as the umpire, can, with any degree of candour or consistency, allege the possible motives of the writer or speaker, as a sufficient cause for setting aside the force of his argumentation. It is only, in fact, the very weakness of resting upon *authorities*, more than upon *reasons*, that can account for this reluctance to allow their full weight to the statements of the professional teachers of religion; and the only effectual mode of counteracting these latent objections, (for they are such as many are ashamed to acknowledge, while they are acting under their influence) is to produce that very species of authority, which they are so much disposed to follow,—the authority of great names. We must try to remove a prejudice resting upon authority, by shewing that authority is still stronger on the side of truth than of error, of virtue than of vice, of faith than of infidelity, of piety than of profaneness; and, since great names, or names supposed to be great, have been thrown into the one scale, to place also in the other names equally, or even more unquestionably great, and to which no professional stigma or suspicion can possibly be attached. “There is unfortunately in many men, (says an eminent prelate, who united all the acuteness of science with the belief of Christianity,) a strange prepossession against every thing written by churchmen, in defence of the Christian religion.—That “priests of all religions are the same;” that “they defend

altars on which their lives depend,"—with a hundred other expressions of similar tendency, are frequent in the mouths of unbelievers. We sincerely forgive them this wrong; but, as the charge of selfishness and hypocrisy cannot, with any shadow of propriety, be brought against Mr. Addison, and such other laymen as have written in support of Christianity, we entreat them to give a sober attention to what these unprejudiced writers have advanced on the subject. Surely eternal life is too important a concern to be jested away in sarcastic witticisms, and frothy disputations *."

Distinguished laymen themselves have not only admitted the existence of such a prejudice against the writings of the clergy, but have pleaded its inveterate influence on many minds, as an apology for their own productions on the subject of religion.

"It is, I am aware, extremely ridiculous for those, who adopt the prescriptions of their physicians, and act upon the advice of their lawyers, although they are professional, to object to defences of Christianity from the pens of clergymen, *because* they are professional; yet, absurd and uncandid as the objection is, it is often advanced. It is therefore proper to meet it; and at times to shew, that there are those, who cannot, on such occasions, be actuated by any love of worldly applause, or any thirst after emolument, but who feel sufficiently interested about religion, and are sufficiently convinced of its powerful tendency to improve the conduct of individuals, and

* Bishop Watson's Note, in the contents of his *Theological Tracts*, vol. v.

to augment the general stock of happiness, to step for a little while out of their own appropriate province to plead its cause." "There are many persons, from whom the claims of Christianity receive a more respectful attention, when they are urged by one, who is neither a clergyman, nor a methodist*."

"What he may presume to offer on the subject of religion, may, perhaps, be perused with less jealousy, and more candour, from the very circumstance of its having been written by a layman, which must at least exclude the idea, (an idea sometimes illiberally suggested to take off the effect of the works of ecclesiastics,) that it is prompted by motives of self-interest, or of professional prejudice †."

"As to religious books, in general those which have been written by laymen, especially by gentlemen, have (*cæteris paribus*) been better received and more effectual, than those published by clergymen ‡."

A selection, therefore, such as that which is here offered to the reader, may serve, at least, to neutralize this prejudice against the claims of religion; and, by shewing, that its divine authority has been venerated and vindicated by the greatest names in every department of literature, and in every field of human research, may bring the inquirer to the

* Dr. Olinthus Gregory's Letters on the Evidences, Doctrines, and Duties of Christianity. Preface.

† Wilberforce's Practical View of Christianity. Preface.

‡ Honourable Robert Boyle.

subject, with a mind more fairly balanced for exercising his own judgment.

It may do more. It may furnish a very powerful reason, for entering upon the inquiry with the utmost degree of attention, by suggesting the obvious reflection, that those sentiments, which have been avowed and advocated by men of so great celebrity, are at least worthy of being seriously considered; and that, whether they may be ultimately found to be true, or be rejected as false, yet, having been held and cherished by persons of minds so exalted, of learning so extensive, and of characters so independent, they are not to be lightly spoken against, as if they were the pure errors of ignorance, weakness, or timidity.

It may accomplish something farther still. It may be considered as adducing ample and undeniable evidence, that the scheme of a revelation, and of the redemption which it promises, is not, as has been often so confidently alleged, contradictory in its general bearings to the dictates of enlightened reason; since so many masters of reason, (and that not of any peculiar cast of mind, but of all descriptions of intellectual vigour,) men exercised in the most profound inquiries; men acquainted with the most rigid processes of demonstration; men accustomed to the most cautious forms of experiment; men, who, in many cases, had shewn themselves fully emancipated from the trammels of old opinions; and who had, in some instances, avowedly encountered the power of prevailing prejudices,—have nevertheless distinctly declared the belief of a revelation from heaven, and of the doctrines which it unfolds,

to be altogether congenial with the reflections of their own comprehensive minds, with the results of their profound investigations into the works of nature, with the deductions of their enlightened observation of human life, and their enlarged experience of human feelings. This, their belief, though not infallibly right, merely because it is theirs; yet, because it is theirs, is not, and cannot be said to be, incompatible in its nature with sound reason. The reason of such men, (the soundest that the world has ever known,) has embraced that belief; and henceforth, therefore, the principle of such belief is secured effectually from the stigma of irrationality.

That I may act in full conformity with these views, I must not leave these remarks to rest upon my own reasonings; and I gladly appeal once more to the opinion of distinguished laymen themselves, for the utility of thus adducing their authority, and detailing their sentiments, in support of religious truth.

“ In matters of eternal concern, the authority of the highest human opinion, has no claim to be admitted as a ground of belief; but it may, with strictest propriety, be opposed to that of men of inferior learning and penetration; and, whilst the pious derive satisfaction from the perusal of sentiments according with their own, those, who doubt or disbelieve, should be induced to weigh, with candour and impartiality, arguments which have produced conviction in the minds of the best, the wisest, and most learned of mankind.

Among such as have professed a steady belief in the doctrines of Christianity, where shall greater

names be found than those of Bacon and Newton? Of the former, and of Locke, it may be observed, that they were both innovators in science; disdain- ing to follow the sages of antiquity, through the beaten paths of error, they broke through preju- dices, which had long obstructed the progress of sound knowledge, and laid the foundation of science on solid ground; whilst the genius of Newton carried him, "*extra flammantia mœnia mundi.*" These men, to their great praise, and, we may hope, to their eternal happiness, devoted much of their time to the study of the Scriptures. If the evidence of revelation had been weak, who were better qualified to expose its unsoundness? If our national faith were a mere fable, or political superstition, why were minds, which boldly destroyed prejudices in science, blind to those in religion? They read, examined, weighed, and believed; and the same vigorous intellect, that dispersed the mists which concealed the temple of human knowledge, was it- self illuminated with the radiant truths of divine revelation.

Such authorities, and let me now add to them the name of Sir William Jones, are deservedly en- titled to great weight: let those, who supercili- ously reject them, compare their intellectual pow- ers, their scientific attainments, and vigour of ap- plication, with those of the men whom I have nam- ed; the comparison may perhaps lead them to sus- pect, that their incredulity, (to adopt the idea of a profound scholar,) may be the result of a little smattering in learning, and great self-conceit, and

that, by hard study and a humbled mind, they may regain the religion which they have left *.”

“ Newton was a Christian ; Newton, whose mind burst forth from the fetters fastened by nature upon our finite conceptions ; Newton, whose science was truth, and the foundation of whose knowledge of it was philosophy : not those visionary and arrogant presumptions, which too often usurp its name, but philosophy resting upon the basis of mathematics, which, like figures, cannot lie. Newton, who carried the line and rule to the uttermost barriers of creation ; and explored the principles by which all created matter exists, and is held together. But this extraordinary man, in the mighty reach of his mind, overlooked, perhaps, the errors which a minuter investigation of the created things on this earth might have taught him. What shall then be said, of the great Mr. Boyle, who looked into the organic structure of all matter, even to the inanimate substances, which the foot treads upon ? Such a man, may be supposed to have been equally qualified with Mr. Paine, to ‘ look up through nature, to nature’s ‘ God.’ Yet the result of all his contemplations, was the most confirmed and devout belief in all, which the author (Paine) holds in contempt, as despicable and drivelling superstition. But this error might, perhaps, arise from a want of due attention to the foundations of human judgment, and the structure of that understanding which God has given us for the investigation of truth. Let that question be answered by Mr. Locke, who, to the

* Lord Teignmouth’s Life of Sir William Jones, p. 300.

highest pitch of devotion and adoration, was a Christian. Mr. Locke, whose office was to detect the errors of thinking, by going up to the very fountains of thought, and to direct into the proper tract of reasoning the devious mind of man, by shewing him its whole process, from the first perceptions of sense, to the last conclusions of ratiocination; putting a rein upon false opinion, by practical rules for the conduct of human judgment.

But these men, it may be said, were only deep thinkers, and lived in their closets, unaccustomed to the traffic of the world, and to the laws which practically regulate mankind. Gentlemen! in the place, where we now sit to administer the justice of this great country, the never-to-be-forgotten Sir Matthew Hale presided; whose faith in Christianity is an exalted commentary upon its truth and reason, and whose life was a glorious example of its fruits; whose justice, drawn from the pure fountain of the Christian dispensation, will be in all ages a subject of the highest reverence and admiration.—But it is said by the author, that the Christian fable is but the tale of the more ancient superstitions of the world, and may be easily detected by a proper understanding of the mythologies of the Heathens. Did Milton understand these mythologies? Was he less versed than Mr. Paine in the superstitions of the world? No, they were the subject of his immortal song; and, though shut out from all recurrence to them, he poured them forth from the stores of a memory, rich with all that man ever knew, and laid them in their order, as the illustration of real and exalted faith, the unquestionable source of that fervid ge-

nius, which has cast a kind of shade upon all the other works of man. The result of his thinking was nevertheless not quite the same as the author's before us. The mysterious incarnation of our blessed Saviour (which this work blasphemes in words so wholly unfit for the mouth of a Christian, or for the ear of a court of justice, that I dare not, and will not give them utterance,) Milton made the grand conclusion of his *Paradise Lost*; the rest from his finished labours, the ultimate hope, expectation, and glory of the world.

Thus you find all that is great, or wise, or splendid, or illustrious amongst created beings; all the minds gifted beyond ordinary nature, if not inspired by its universal Author for the advancement and dignity of the world, though divided by distant ages, and by clashing opinions, yet joining, as it were, in one sublime chorus to celebrate the truth of Christianity, and laying upon its holy altars, the never fading offerings of their immortal wisdom *.”

* Lord Erskine's Speeches, ii. 196.

A

SELECT LIST OF LAY AUTHORS,

Who have treated directly on religious subjects, and whose works deserve to be fully perused, especially those distinguished by an asterisk.

- ADDISON'S Evidences of Christianity.
- * AINSLIE'S Father's Gift, 2 parts.
- * BABINGTON on the Religious Education of Youth.
- BACON'S, Lord, Confession of Faith.
- BARRINGTON, Lord, on the teaching of the Holy Spirit.
- BATES' Christian Politics.
- Rural Philosophy.
- * BEATTIE'S Evidences of Christianity.
- * BOWDLER'S Theological Tracts.
- * BOYLE'S, Hon. Robert, Theological Works.
- BROWNE'S, Sir Thomas, Religio Medici.
- * BRYANT on the Authenticity of Scripture.
- BURN'S, Major General, Christian Officer.
- CHATEAUBRIAND'S Beauties of Christianity.
- CUMBERLAND'S Plain Reasons for being a Christian.
- * CUNINGHAME on the Prophecies.
- * DALRYMPLE'S Answer to Gibbon.
- Remains of Christian Antiquity.
- * DALRYMPLE, Earl of Stair, on the Divine Perfections.
- DE MORNAY, Earl of Plessis, on the Truth of Christianity.
- ERASMUS'S Paraphrases.
- Exposition of the Creed, Decalogue, and Lord's Prayer.
- * ERSKINE, Thomas, Esq. on the Internal Evidence of Christianity.
- EULER'S Letters to a German Princess.
- FELTHAM'S, Owen, Resolves.
- * FORBES, President, on Incredulity.
- Thoughts on Religion.

- * GREGORY, Olinthus, Letters on the Evidences, &c. of Christianity.
- * GROTIUS on the Truth of Christianity.
- HALDANE on the Authority of Revealed Religion.
- HALE, Sir Matthew, on the Origination of Mankind.
- * ——— Contemplations.
- * HALLER'S, Baron, Letters to his Daughter.
- * HARTLEY on the Evidences of Christianity, vol. ii. of his Works.
- JENYNS, Soame, on the Internal Evidence of Christianity.
- KING, Sir Peter, on the Creed.
- On the Primitive Church.
- * LOCKE on the Reasonableness of Christianity.
- * LYTTLETON, Lord, on the Conversion of Paul.
- MEDE, Dr. on the Diseases mentioned in Scripture.
- * MORE'S, Mrs. Hannah, Works.
- * NAPIER, Lord, on the Apocalypse.
- NELSON'S Fasts and Festivals of the Church of England.
- * NEWTON, Sir Isaac, on the Prophecies.
- NIEWENTYTE'S Religious Philosopher.
- ROBINSON'S Christian Philosophy.
- * PASCAL'S Thoughts.
- PERCEVAL, Earl of Egmont, on the Importance of a Religious Life.
- * RAY'S Wisdom of God in the Creation.
- SELDEN de Legibus Hebræorum.
- * SERLE'S *Horæ Solitariæ*.
- * ——— Christian Remembrancer.
- * SHARP, Granville, on the Divinity of Christ.
- WEST on the Resurrection.
- * WILBERFORCE'S Practical View of Christianity.
- * ———— On the Religion of the Great.
- * SINCLAIR'S, Miss, Letter on the Principles of the Christian Faith.

TESTIMONIES



NATURAL AND REVEALED RELIGION.

CHAPTER I.

TESTIMONIES TO THE IRRATIONAL NATURE AND
INJURIOUS EFFECTS OF ATHEISM, SCEPTICISM,
AND IRRELIGION.

SECTION I.

ATHEISM.

ABSURDITY OF ATHEISM.—Scepticism is the incredulity of scientific men, or it is the credulity of absurd principles; and this arises from the want of proper principles in those, who will philosophise, or draw general conclusions beyond their science. But atheism, so far as this is an assertion that there is no first cause, is an expression, which has not properly a meaning; for they, who are to make this assertion, must either found the negative proposition upon some principle, or they only persuade themselves that they believe what they cannot comprehend. But, if atheism is to be founded upon some principle, I confess myself ig-

norant of what this principle may be. It is evident, that the conclusion of evil in the constitution of things leads not to atheism, but to dæmonism; and the allowing of both good and evil leads to polytheism, or to different principles in the first cause. But I believe no man of rational understanding can find any principle for concluding, that there is no first cause; for this necessarily implies, that he understands how things could be produced without a cause. Now, if a man has seen this truth, *that things may be produced without a cause*, he has but to reveal it, that so it may be believed by other men; but to deny the existence of a first cause from no other reason than this, *that to him the first cause is unknown*, would be equally absurd as to deny his own existence, because he knows not how he had a being.—*Hutton's * Investigation*, iii. 135.

FOLLY OF ATHEISM.—I had rather believe all the fables in the Legend, and the Talmud, and the Alcoran, than that this universal frame is without a mind. And therefore God never wrought a miracle to convince atheism, because his ordinary works convince it. It is true, that a little philosophy inclineth many minds to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth many minds about to religion; for, while the mind of man looketh upon second causes scattered, it may sometimes rest in them and go no further; but when it beholdeth the chain of them confederate and linked together, it must needs fly to providence and deity. Nay, even that school which is most accused of atheism, does most demonstrate religion; that is, the school of Leucippus, and Democritus, and Epicurus. For it is a thousand times more credible, that four mu-

* The ingenious author of the Huttonian Theory of the Earth.

table elements, and one immutable fifth essence, duly and eternally placed, need no God, than that an army of infinite small portions, or seeds unplaced, should have produced this order and beauty without a divine marshal. The Scripture saith, "the fool hath said in his heart there is no God;" it is not said "the fool hath thought in his heart," so as he rather saith it by rote to himself, as that he would have, than that he can thoroughly believe it, or be persuaded of it; for none deny there is a God, but those for whom it maketh that there were no God. It appeareth in nothing more that atheism is rather in the lip than in the heart of man, than by this, that atheists will ever be talking of that their opinion, as if they fainted in it within themselves, and would be glad to be strengthened by the consent of others. Nay more, you shall have atheists strive to get disciples, as it fareth with other sects. And, which is most of all, you shall have of them that will suffer for atheism, and not recant; whereas, if they did truly think that there were no such thing as God, why should they trouble themselves? They that deny a God destroy man's nobility, for certainly man is of kin to the beasts by his body, and if he be not of kin to God by his spirit, he is a base and ignoble creature. It destroys likewise magnanimity, and the raising of human nature; for take an example of a dog, and mark what a generosity and courage he will put on when he finds himself maintained by a man, who to him is instead of a God, or "*melior natura*;" which courage is manifestly such, as that creature, without the confidence of a better nature than his own, could never attain. So man, when he resteth and assureth himself upon divine protection and favour, gathereth a force and faith, which human nature could not attain. Therefore, as atheism is in all respects hateful, so in this, that it depriveth

human nature of the means to exalt itself above human frailty.—*Bacon's Essays*, p. 50. 1755.

GLOOMY VIEWS OF ATHEISM.—How happens it then, that some pretend, that atheism frees us from every kind of terror about futurity? I cannot perceive that such a conclusion flows from this fatal system. A God, such as my heart delineates, encourages and moderates all my feelings; I say to myself, he is good and indulgent, he knows our weakness, he loves to produce happiness, and I see the advances of death without terror, and often with hope. But every fear would become reasonable, if I lived under the dominion of an insensible nature, whose laws and revolutions are unknown; I seek for some means to escape from its power; but even death cannot afford me a retreat, or space an asylum. I reflect, if it is possible, to find compassion and goodness; but here is no prime intelligence, no first cause; a blind nature surrounds us and governs imperiously; I in vain demand what is to be done with me? it is deaf to my voice. Devoid of will, thought, and feeling, it is governed by an irresistible force, whose motion is a mystery never to be unfolded. What a view for a human mind, to anticipate the destruction of all our primitive ideas of order, justice, and goodness! Shall I further say, when even, in every system, the entrance of the future was unknown, I should be less unhappy and forlorn if it was to a father, a benefactor, that I committed the deposit of life which I held from him; this last communication with the Master of the world would mitigate my pains; my eyes when closing would perceive his power; that I should not lose all, I might still hope that that God remained with those I loved, and find some comfort in the thought, that my destiny was united to his will that my existence, and

the employments I devoted myself to, formed one of the indelible points of his eternal remembrance; and that the incomprehensible darkness I was going to plunge into, is equally a part of his empire. But when a feeling and elevated soul, which sometimes enjoys a sentiment of its own grandeur, should certainly know, that dragged by a blind motion, it was going to be dissipated, to be scattered in that dreary waste, where all that is most vile on earth is indifferently precipitated; such a thought would blight the noblest actions, and be a continual source of sadness and despondency.—*Necker's Religious Opinions*, p. 379.

STRANGE ZEAL OF ATHEISM.—After having treated of these false zealots in religion, I cannot forbear mentioning a monstrous species of men, who one could not think had any existence in nature, were they not to be met with in ordinary conversation;—I mean the zealots in atheism. One would fancy that these men, though they fall short in every other respect of those who make a profession of religion, would at least outshine them in this particular, and be exempt from that single fault which seems to grow out of the imprudent fervours of religion. But so it is, that infidelity is propagated with so much fierceness and contention, wrath and indignation, as if the safety of mankind depended upon it. There is something so ridiculous and perverse in this kind of zealots, that one does not know how to set them out in their proper colours. They are a sort of gamblers, who are eternally upon the fret, though they play for nothing. They are perpetually teasing their friends to come over to them, though, at the same time, they allow, that neither of them shall get any thing by the bargain. In short, the zeal of spreading atheism is, if possible, more absurd than atheism itself.

Since I have mentioned this unaccountable zeal, which appears in atheists and infidels, I must farther observe, that they are likewise, in a most particular manner, possessed with the spirit of bigotry. They are wedded to opinions full of contradiction and impossibility; and, at the same time, look upon the smallest difficulty in an article of faith, as a sufficient reason for objecting to it. Notions, that fall in with the common reason of mankind, that are conformable to the sense of all ages and all nations, (not to mention their tendency for promoting the happiness of societies, or of particular persons,) are exploded as errors and prejudices; and schemes erected in their stead, that are altogether monstrous and irrational, and require the most extravagant credulity to embrace them. I would fain ask one of these bigoted infidels,—supposing all the great points of atheism, as the casual or eternal formation of the world, the materiality of a thinking substance, the mortality of the soul, the fortuitous organization of the body, the motions and gravitation of matter, with the like particulars, were laid together, and formed into a kind of creed, according to the opinions of the most celebrated atheists; I say, supposing such a creed as this were formed, and imposed upon any one people in the world, whether it would not require an infinitely greater measure of faith, than any set of articles which they so violently oppose. Let me, therefore, advise this generation of wranglers, for their own and for the public good, to act at least so consistently with themselves, as not to burn with zeal for irreligion, and with bigotry for nonsense.—*Addison, Spectator, No. 185.*

CRIMINALITY OF ATHEISM.—Amongst connate obligations, are such as are planted as it were in our being;

the most eminent is that which lies on all men with respect to almighty God, the supreme governor of the world; by virtue of which, we are bound to adore his majesty, and to obey his commandments and his laws. Whosoever wholly violates and breaks through this obligation, stands guilty of the most heinous charge of atheism; because he must, at the same time, deny either the existence of God, or his care of human affairs. Which two sins, with regard to their moral consequences and effects, are equivalent to each other, and either of them overthrows all religion, representing it as a frightful mockery, introduced to awe the ignorant vulgar into some decency and duty. Therefore we ought in justice to dread and explode, as most foul and scandalous, the notion of Hobbes, in which he would rank atheism among the faults of imprudence or ignorance, as if it were not properly a sin, but a mistake, a folly more worthy of pardon than of punishment.—*Puffendorf's Law of Nature and Nations, Book III. ch. iv. sect. 4.*

My dear Marquis, there is nothing good in atheism. This system is very bad, both in physics and in morals. An honest man may inveigh against superstition and fanaticism, and may detest persecution: he renders a service to mankind, if he diffuses the principles of toleration; but what good can he do, if he disseminates those of atheism? Will men be more virtuous for not acknowledging a God, who enjoins the practice of virtue? Assuredly not. I would have princes and their ministers to acknowledge a God; nay more, a God who punishes and who pardons. Without this restraint, I should consider them as ferocious animals, who, to be sure, would not eat me just after a plentiful meal, but certainly would devour me, were I to fall into their clutches when they are hungry; who, after they had picked my bones, would

not have the least idea that they had done any thing wrong.—*Voltaire's Correspondence*, xii. 349, quoted by *Chateaubriand*.

If neglect and breaches of the social and moral duties are criminal, even in the eyes of freethinkers, what must be the guilt of neglecting the only duty, properly speaking, to God, of denying him the only return which he expects, because it is the only return he has qualified us to make, reverence, love, and gratitude? Ingratitude to men is marked with the blackest stain; what must then that vice be, when it has for its object the source of all goodness? And what chance is there, that it shall pass unpunished? It is astonishing that men, who justly look with such horror and detestation on murder and parricide, should think so coolly on the abnegation of the Deity; which denying him his tribute of reverence and gratitude is. But the instances of punishment, which the magistrate, for the preservation of the society, inflicts, helps to keep up the idea of horror that attends the first; and the forbearance of vengeance in the latter, is, by weak pretenders to reason, made an argument to conclude that no offence is given.

It is a strange imagination, to admit that men are formed with ideas of right and wrong, with a sense of duty, and the contrary, and with full physical liberty to act as they shall best like; and yet to maintain that it is absolutely indifferent to the Deity, who gave them that rule of conduct, whether they conform to or transgress it, whether they do right or wrong; and, consequently, that it is indifferent to them, (if they escape punishment from their fellow-creatures,) whether they have or have not conformed themselves to the rule of their Creator and Sovereign Lord.—*President Forbes on Incredulity*.

SECTION II.

SCEPTICISM.

IRRATIONALITY OF SCEPTICISM.—This doctrine, (that is pyrrhonism,) if it go no farther than to discountenance reasoning upon words, to which we can affix no clear and precise ideas; than to proportion our belief in any proposition to the degree of probability it bears; than to ascertain, as to every species of knowledge, the bounds of certainty we are able to acquire—this scepticism is then rational; but, when it extends to demonstrated truth; when it attacks the principles of morality, it becomes either weakness or insanity.—*Condorcet's Historical View*, p. 105.

Upon a comparison of the writings of modern sceptics, it will appear, that they have adopted this method of philosophising upon very different grounds, and for very different purposes; but, in whatever form scepticism appears, or from whatever cause it springs, it may be confidently pronounced hostile to true philosophy; for its obvious tendency is to invalidate every principle of human knowledge, to destroy every criterion of truth, and to undermine the foundation of all science, human and divine.—*Brucker's History of Philosophy*, by Enfield, ii. 480.

CREDULITY OF SCEPTICISM.—That implicit credulity is a mark of a feeble mind, will not be disputed, but it may not perhaps be as generally acknowledged, that the case is the same with unlimited scepticism: on the contrary, we are sometimes apt to ascribe this disposition to a more than ordinary vigour of intellect. Such a prejudice was by no means unnatural at that

period in the history of modern Europe, when reason first began to throw off the yoke of authority, and when it unquestionably required a superiority of understanding, as well as of intrepidity, for an individual to resist the contagion of prevailing superstition. But, in the present age, in which the tendency of fashionable opinions is directly opposite to those of the vulgar, the philosophical creed, or the philosophical scepticism, of by far the greater number of those, who value themselves on an emancipation from popular errors, arises from the very same weakness with the credulity of the multitude: nor is it going too far to say with Rousseau, that “ he who, in the end of the “ eighteenth century, has brought himself to abandon “ all his early principles without discrimination, would “ probably have been a bigot in the days of the “ league.” In the midst of these contrary impulses of fashionable and of vulgar prejudices, he alone evinces the superiority and the strength of his mind, who is able to disentangle truth from error, and to oppose the clear conclusion of his own unbiassed faculties to the united clamours of superstition and of false philosophy.—Such are the men, whom nature marks out to be the lights of the world, to fix the wavering opinions of the multitude, and to impress their own character on that of their age.

There is, I think, good reason for hoping, that the sceptical tendency of the present age will be only a temporary evil. While it continues, however, it is an evil of the most alarming nature; and, as it extends in general, not only to religion and morality, but, in some measure, also to politics, and the conduct of life, it is equally fatal to the comfort of the individual and to the improvement of society.—*Stewart's Philosophy of the Human Mind*, vol. i. p. 33.

DOGMATISM OF SCEPTICS.—I cannot comprehend how any man can be sincerely a sceptic on principle. Such philosophers either do not exist, or they are certainly the most miserable of men. To be in doubt about things which it is important for us to know, is a situation too perplexing to the human mind ; it cannot long support such incertitude ; but will, in spite of itself, determine one way or other, rather deceiving itself, than content to believe nothing of the matter. In this situation, I consulted the philosophers ; I turned over their books, and examined their several opinions ; in all which, I found them vain, dictatorial, and dogmatical, even in their pretended scepticism ; ignorant of nothing, yet proving nothing ; ridiculing one another, and in this last particular only, wherein they were all agreed, they seemed to be in the right. Affecting to triumph whenever they attacked their opponents, they wanted every thing to make them capable of a vigorous defence. If you examine their reasons, you will find them calculated only to refute ; if you number voices, every one is reduced to his own suffrage : they agree in nothing but in disputing.

But were the philosophers even in a situation to discover the truth, which of them would be interested in so doing ? Each of them knows very well, that his system is no better founded than those of others ; he defends it, nevertheless, because it is his own. There is not one of them, who, really knowing truth from falsehood, would not prefer the latter, of his own invention, to the former discovered by any body else. Where is the philosopher, who would not readily deceive mankind, to increase his own reputation ? Where is he, who secretly proposes any other object, than that of distinguishing himself from the rest of mankind ? Provided he raises himself above the vulgar, carries

away the prize of fame from his competitors, what doth he require more? The most essential point is to think differently from the rest of the world. Among believers he is an atheist, and among atheists he affects to be a believer*.—*Rousseau's Emilius*, vol. ii. p. 124. Edit. Ed. 1773.

MISCHIEVOUS EFFECTS OF SCEPTICISM.—Avoid all those, who, under pretence of explaining natural causes, plant the most destructive doctrines in the hearts of men, and whose apparent scepticism is a hundred times more dogmatical and affirmative, than the decisive tone of their adversaries. Under the haughty pretext of being the only persons who are truly enlightened, honest, and sincere, they subject us impiously to their magisterial decisions; and give us, for the true principles of things, only unintelligible systems, which they have raised in their own imaginations. Add to this, that, while they overturn, destroy, and trample under feet every thing that is respectable among mankind, they deprive the afflicted of the last consolation in their misery, take from the rich and powerful the only check to the indulgence of their passions; they eradicate from our hearts the remorse of guilt and the hopes of virtue, absurdly boasting themselves, at the same time, the friends and benefactors of mankind. The truth, say they, can never be hurtful. So far I am of their opinion, and this is to me a great proof, that what they teach cannot be true. Young man, be sincere without vanity: while you acquiesce in your ignorance, you neither deceive

* There may be a little of the exaggeration of satire in the above representation; but its general applicableness to the sceptical contemporaries of the author is sufficiently confirmed by the letters of De Grimm.

yourself nor others. If ever you cultivate your talents so far as to enable you to publish your sentiments to the world, speak from the dictates of your own conscience, without troubling yourself about applause. The abuse of knowledge produces incredulity. The man of science disdains the sentiments of the vulgar, and would even be singular in his own. The vanity of philosophy leads to infidelity, as a blind devotion leads to fanaticism. Avoid both extremes: remain ever firm in the way of truth, or in that which appears so to you in the simplicity of your heart, without ever being drawn aside by pride or weakness. Be not afraid to acknowledge God among philosophers, nor to stand up an advocate for humanity among persecutors. You may perhaps be thought singular; but you will carry about with you the innate testimony of a good conscience, which will enable you to dispense with the approbation of men. Whether they love or hate you, whether they admire or despise your writings, it is no matter: speak what is true; do what is right; for the object of greatest importance is to discharge our duty. Our private interest, my child, deceives us; but the hope of the just cannot be deceived.—*Rousseau's Emilius*, vol. ii. 226.

SECTION III.

IRRELIGION*.

SENSELESSNESS OF IRRELIGION.—If they have the least reserve of common sense, it will not be difficult to

* This title is meant to express practical impiety.

make them apprehend, how miserably they abuse themselves, by laying so false a foundation of applause and esteem. For this is not the way to raise a character even with worldly men, who, as they are able to pass a shrewd judgment on things, so they easily discern that the only method of succeeding in our temporal affairs, is to prove ourselves honest, faithful, prudent, and capable of advancing the interest of friends ; because men naturally love nothing but that, which some way contributes to their use and benefit. But now what benefit can we any way derive from hearing a man confess, that he has eased himself of the burden of religion ; that he believes no God as the witness and inspector of his conduct ; that he considers himself as absolute master of what he does, and accountable for it only to his own mind ? Will he fancy, that we shall be hence induced to repose a greater degree of confidence in him hereafter ? or to depend on his comfort, his advice, or assistance, in the necessities of life ? Can he imagine us to take any great delight or complacency, when he tells us, that he doubts whether our very soul be any thing more than a little wind and smoke ? Nay, when he tells it us with an air of assurance, and a voice that testifies the contentment of his heart ? Is this a thing to be spoken of with pleasantry ? or ought it not rather to be lamented with the deepest sadness, as the most melancholic reflection that can strike our thoughts ?

If they would compose themselves to serious consideration, they must perceive the method, in which they are engaged, to be so very ill chosen, so repugnant to gentility, and so remote even from that good air and grace which they pursue ; that, on the contrary, nothing can more effectually expose them to the contempt and aversion of mankind, or mark them out for persons defective in parts and judgment. And

indeed, should we demand from them an account of their sentiments, and of the reasons which they have to entertain this suspicion in religious matters, what they offered would appear so miserably weak and trifling, as rather to confirm us in our belief. This is no more than what one of their own fraternity told them, with great smartness, on such an occasion: "If you continue," says he, "to dispute at this rate, you will infallibly make me a Christian." And the gentleman was in the right; for who would not tremble to find himself embarked in the same cause with so forlorn, so despicable companions?—*Pascal's Thoughts.*

MADNESS OF IRRELIGION.—I am ignorant of the being, who has placed me in the world. I know neither what is meant by the world, nor what is meant by myself. I am in a dreadful state of ignorance concerning all things. I am ignorant of the nature of my own body, my own senses, and my own soul. Even that part of me which gives birth to what I now utter, and which reflects upon itself and upon every thing around it, is as unknown to me as all the rest. I behold this fearful expanse of the universe which surrounds me, and find myself restricted to a nook in this immensity of space, without knowing why I am fixed in one spot rather than in another, nor why the particle, allotted for my earthly existence, is singled out at the present rather than at any other period of that eternity, which is to follow me. On every side I behold an infinity, which swallows me up like an atom, or like a passing shadow, enduring but for a moment. All I understand is, that it will soon be my lot to die. But I know least of all in what this death, which I am unable to escape, consists. As I know not whence I came, so neither do I know

whither I am going. I only know, that upon leaving this world I fall for ever into a state of annihilation, or into the hands of an incensed God, without comprehending, to which of these two states I am to look forward, as my eternal heritage.

Behold, then, my condition replete with wretchedness, weakness, and obscurity! Nevertheless, upon the review of all this, I conclude that I have nothing to do, but to pass my days, without giving myself any concern about my future destiny. I conclude that I have nothing to do, but to follow my own inclinations, without reflection or solicitude; doing by this means all I can to incur eternal misery, if what is said concerning it should prove ultimately true. Perhaps it would be possible for me to obtain some satisfaction upon the subject of my doubts; but I am determined not to be at this trouble, nor to take a single step in search of it: and, in short, treating with contempt all who concern themselves about this subject, I am determined to go on without precaution or alarm. I am determined to risk this important stake, and to glide smoothly along the stream, till death finds me in a state of uncertainty respecting my future everlasting lot.—*Pascal's Thoughts.*

WORTHLESS CHARACTER OF IRRELIGIOUS SCOFFERS.
—Nevertheless, the bold and frivolous discourses, which are permitted against religion in general, have made such a progress, that at present the persons who most respect these opinions, without ostentation or severity, find themselves obliged to conceal or moderate their sentiments, lest they should be exposed to a kind of contemptuous pity, or run the risk of being suspected of hypocrisy. We are at liberty to speak on every subject, except the most grand and interesting

which can occupy man. What strange authority gave rise to this imperious legislation, which is termed fashionable! What a miserable conspiracy, that of weakness against Omnipotence! Men are proud of knowing at what hour the king wakes, goes to the chace, or returns; they are very eager to be informed of the vile intrigues, which successively debase or exalt his courtiers; they pass, in short, their whole lives in panting after objects of vanity and badges of slavery; they are continually brought into conversation; and they proscribe, under the dreadful name of vulgarity, the most remote expression which would recal the idea of the harmonious universe, and the Being who has bestowed on us all the gifts of the mind; what is most excellent in our nature we overlook, to dwell only on the inflations of vanity. Ungrateful that we are! Our intelligence, our will, all our senses, are the seal of an unknown power; and is it the name of our Master and Benefactor, that we dare not pronounce? It is from your modern philosophers that this false shame arises; you who spread derision over the most respectable sentiments; and, employing in the dispute the frivolous shafts of ridicule, have given confidence to the most frivolous of men: you have for your followers a numerous race, which is taken promiscuously from every rank and age.

We now reckon amongst those, who oppose a contemptuous smile to religious opinions, a multitude of young people, often incapable of supporting the most trivial arguments, and who, perhaps, could not connect two or three abstract propositions. These pretended philosophers artfully, and almost perfidiously, take advantage of the first flight of self-love, to persuade beginners, that they are able to judge at a glance of the serious questions, which have eluded the pene-

tration of the most exercised thinkers. In short, such is, in general, the decisive tone of the irreligious men of our age, that in hearing them so boldly murmur about the disorders of the universe, and the mistakes of Providence, we are only surprised to see how much they differ in stature from those rebellious giants, mentioned in the heathen mythology.—*Necker's Religious Opinions*, 392.

Respecting this new, or rather revived system of philosophy, *soi disante telle*, it may perhaps be confessed, that it may possibly have done some good; but then it has certainly done much more mischief to mankind. On the one hand, it may perhaps be allowed, that to its prevalence we owe the general system of toleration which seems to prevail*, which is, I fear, the only speck of white that marks the present day. Yet even this solitary virtue, if infidelity be its basis, is founded on a false principle. Christian charity, which includes the idea of universal philanthropy, and which, when *really Christian*, is the true foundation on which virtue should be erected, and not the opinion that all religions should be tolerated, because all are alike erroneous. But even allowing this boasted benefit its full weight, to the same cause we are, I doubt, on the other hand, indebted for that profligacy of manners, or, to call it by the most gentle name, that frivolity which every where prevails. To this cause we owe that total disregard, that fastidious dislike to all serious thought, for every man can be a deist without thinking; he is made so at his toilette, and, whilst his hair is dressing, reads himself into an adept; that shameful and degrading apathy to all that

* The persecutions of Christians by the heathen philosophers in ancient times, and by the infidel rulers of France in later times, are not favourable to this supposition.

is great and noble; in a word, that perfect indifference to right or wrong, which enervates and characterises this unmeaning and frivolous age *.—*Earl of Charlemont; see Life, i. 237.*

I mean that you should by no means seem to approve, encourage, or applaud these libertine notions which strike at religion equally, and which are the poor thread-bare topics of half-wits and minute philosophers. Even those, who are silly enough to laugh at their jokes, are still wise enough to distrust and detest their character; for, putting moral virtues at the highest and religion at the lowest, religion must still be allowed to be a collateral security at least to virtue; and every prudent man will sooner trust to two securities than to one. Whenever, therefore, you happen to be in company with these pretended *esprits forts*, or with thoughtless libertines, who laugh at all religion to show their wit, or disclaim it to complete their riot, let no word or look of yours intimate the least approbation: on the contrary, let a solemn gravity express your dislike; but enter not into the subject, and decline such unprofitable and indecent controversies. Depend upon this truth, that every man is the worse looked upon, and the less trusted, for being thought to have no religion, in spite of all the pompous, specious epithets he may assume of *esprit fort*, freethinker, or moral philosopher, and a wise atheist (if such a thing there is) would, for his own interest and character in this world, pretend to some religion.

Your moral character must be not only pure, but, like Cæsar's wife, unsuspected. The least speck or blemish upon it is fatal. Nothing degrades and vilifies

* It is not known when this passage was written, but the noble author died in the year 1799.

more, for it excites and unites detestation and contempt. There are, however, wretches in the world, profligate enough to explode all notion of moral good and evil, to maintain that they are merely local, and depend entirely upon the customs and fashions of different countries. Nay, there are still, if possible, more unaccountable wretches; I mean those, who affect to preach and propagate such absurd and infamous notions, without believing them themselves. These are the devil's hypocrites. Avoid, as much as possible, the company of such people, who reflect a degree of discredit and infamy upon all who converse with them. But, as you may sometimes by accident fall into such company, take great care that no complaisance, no good humour, no warmth of festal mirth, ever make you seem even to acquiesce, much less to approve or applaud such infamous doctrines; on the other hand, do not debate nor enter into serious argument upon a subject so much below it; but content yourself with telling these *apostles*, that you know they are not serious; that you have a much better opinion of them, than they would have you to have; and that you are very sure they would not practise the doctrine they preach. But put your private mark upon them, and shun for ever afterwards.—*Chesterfield's Letters to his Son*, vol. ii. p. 228.

I might take this opportunity to add, that ridicule is not always contented with ravaging and destroying the works of man, but boldly and impiously attacks those of God; enters even into the sanctuary, and profanes the temple of the Most High. A late noble writer has made use of it to asperse the characters, and destroy the validity, of the writers of both the Old and New Testament; and to change the solemn truths of Christianity into matter of mirth and laughter. The books of Moses are called by him fables and

tales, fit only for the amusement of children : and St. Paul is treated by him as an enthusiast, an idiot, and an avowed enemy to that religion which he professed. One would not surely think, that there was any thing in Christianity so ludicrous, as to raise laughter, or to excite contempt; but, on the contrary, that the nature of its precepts, and its own intrinsic excellence, would at least have secured it from such indignities. Nothing gives us a higher opinion of those ancient heathens, whom our modern bigots are so apt to despise, than that air of piety and devotion which runs through all their writings; and, though the Pagan theology was full of absurdities and inconsistencies, which the more refined spirits among their poets and philosophers must have doubtless despised, rejected, and contemned; such was their respect and veneration for the established religion of their country, such their regard to decency and seriousness, such their modesty and diffidence in affairs of so much weight and importance, that we very seldom meet with jest or ridicule on subjects, which they held thus sacred and respectable.

The privilege of publicly laughing at religion, and the profession of it; of making the laws of God, and the great concerns of eternity, the objects of mirth and ridicule, was reserved for more enlightened ages, and denied the more pious heathens; to reflect disgrace and ignominy on the Christian æra. It hath indeed been the fate of the best and purest religion in the world, to become the jest of fools; and not only, with its Divine Founder, to be scourged and persecuted, but with him to be mocked and spit at, trampled on and despised. But to consider the dreadful consequences of ridicule on this occasion, will better become the divine than essayist; to him therefore shall I refer it, and conclude this essay by observing, that,

after all the undeserved encomiums, so lavishly bestowed on this child of wit and malice, so universally approved and admired, I know of no service the pernicious talent of ridicule can be of, unless it be to raise the blush of modesty, and put virtue out of countenance; to enhance the miseries of the wretched, and poison the feast of happiness; to insult man, affront God; to make us, in short, hateful to our fellow-creatures, uneasy to ourselves, and highly displeasing to the Almighty.—*Smollett*.

Having mentioned common-place observations, I will particularly caution you against either using, believing, or approving them. They are the common topics of wittlings and coxcombs; those who really have wit have the utmost contempt for them, and scorn even to laugh at the pert things that those would-be wits say upon such subjects.

Religion is one of their favourite topics: it is all priestcraft; and an invention contrived and carried on by priests of all religions, for their own power and profit. From this absurd and false principle flow the common-place insipid jokes and insults upon the clergy. With these people, every friend of every religion is either a public or a concealed unbeliever, drunkard, and whoremaster; whereas, I conceive that priests are extremely like other men, and neither the better nor the worse for wearing a gown or surplice; but, if they differ from other people, probably it is rather on the side of religion and morality, or at least decency, from their education and manner of life.—*Chesterfield's Letters to his Son*, vol. i. p. 276.

Persons of vicious dispositions are not at all adapted for any laudable employment whatever.—*Rousseau's Emilius*, i. 48.

Freethinkers are almost always unsteady charac-

ters. The affectation of irreligion is, independent of its foolish impiety, always the mark of a bad taste.—*Eugene's Memoirs by himself**, p. 36. *Mudford's Translation*.

* This work has been ascribed to the pen of the Prince de Ligne, field-marshal in the Austrian service, who died in December, 1795, at a very advanced age; and who is pronounced by Madame de Staël to have been a man of the most brilliant conversation in all Europe, and a great personal favourite with most of the crowned heads of the age. It is very obvious that it equally answers the purpose of these extracts, whether the above-cited passage be considered as from the pen of Prince Eugene, or from that of the Prince de Ligne.

CHAPTER II.

 TESTIMONIES TO THE PRINCIPLES OF MORALS,
AND THE FOUNDATION OF VIRTUE.

SECTION I.

MORAL DISTINCTIONS.

REALITY OF MORAL DISTINCTIONS.—Those, who have refused the reality of moral distinctions, may be ranked among the disingenuous disputants. The only way of converting an antagonist of this kind is to leave him to himself; for, finding that nobody keeps up the controversy with him, it is probable he will, at last, of himself, from mere weariness, come over to the side of common sense and reason.—*Hume's Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals.*

CLEARNESS OF MORAL DISTINCTIONS.—Pray, let no quibbles of lawyers, no refinements of casuists, break into the plain notions of right and wrong, which every man's right reason and plain common sense suggests to him. To do as you would be done by, is the plain, sure, and undisputed rule of morality and justice. Stick to that, and be convinced that whatever breaks into it in any degree, however speciously it may be

turned, and however puzzling it may be to answer it, is, notwithstanding, false in itself, unjust, and criminal.—*Chesterfield's Letters to his Son*, ii. 34.

SOURCES OF MORAL DISTINCTIONS.—If it be true (as some theologians have presumed to assert) that benevolence is the sole principle of action in the Deity, we must suppose that the duties of veracity and justice were enjoined by Him, not on account of their intrinsic rectitude, but of their utility; but still, with respect to man, there are sacred and indispensable laws, laws which he never transgresses without incurring the penalty of self-condemnation and remorse. And indeed, if, without the guidance of any internal monitor, he were left to infer the duties incumbent on him from a calculation and comparison of remote effects, we may venture to affirm that there would not be enough of virtue left in the world to hold society together.

To those, who have been accustomed to reflect on the general analogy of the human constitution, and on the admirable adaptation of its various parts to that scene in which we are destined to act, this last consideration will, independently of any examination of the fact, suggest a very strong presumption *à priori* against the doctrine to which the foregoing remarks relate. For is it at all consonant with the other arrangements so wisely calculated for human happiness, to suppose, that the conduct of such a fallible and short-sighted creature as man would be left to be regulated by no other principle than the private opinion of each individual concerning the *expediency* of his own actions? or, in other words, by the conjectures which he might form on the good or evil, resulting, *on the whole*, from an endless train of future contingencies. Were this the case, the opinions of man-

kind, with respect to the rules of morality, would be as various as their judgments about the probable issue of the most doubtful or difficult determinations in politics. Numberless cases might be fancied, in which a person would not only *claim* merit, but actually *possess* it, in consequence of actions which are generally regarded with indignation and abhorrence; for unless we admit such duties as justice, veracity, and gratitude, to be immediately and imperatively sanctioned by the authority of reason and of conscience, it follows as a necessary inference, that we are *bound* to violate them, whenever, by doing so, we have a prospect of advancing any of the essential interests of society; or (which amounts to the same thing) that a good *end* is sufficient to sanctify whatever *means* may appear to us to be necessary for its accomplishment. Even men of the soundest and most penetrating understandings might frequently be led to the perpetration of enormities, if they had no other light to guide them, but what they derived from their own uncertain anticipations of futurity. And when we consider how small the number of such men is, in comparison of those, whose judgments are perverted by the prejudices of education and their own selfish passions, it is easy to see what a scene of anarchy the world would become. Of this, indeed, we have too melancholy an experimental proof in the history of those individuals, who have in practice adopted the rule of *general expediency*, as their whole code of morality; a rule, which the most execrable scourges of the human race have, in all ages, professed to follow, and of which they have uniformly availed themselves, as an apology for their deviations from the ordinary maxims of right and wrong.

Fortunately for mankind, the peace of society is not thus entrusted to accident; the great rules of a virtuous conduct being confessedly of such a nature, as

to be obvious to every sincere and well disposed mind. And it is in a peculiar degree striking, that while the *theory* of ethics involves some of the most abstruse questions, which have ever employed the human faculties, the moral judgments and moral feelings of the most distant ages and nations, with respect to all the most essential duties of life, are one and the same.—*Stewart's Philosophy of the Human Mind*, vol. ii. 478.

SECTION II.

CONNECTION OF MORALITY WITH RELIGION.

BAYLE states a question, whether a people may not be happy in society, and be qualified for good government, upon principles of morality singly, without any sense of religion. The question is ingenious, and may give opportunity for subtle reasoning; but it is useless, because the fact supposed cannot happen. The principles of morality and of religion are equally rooted in our nature: they are indeed weak in children and in savages; but they grow up together, and advance toward maturity with equal steps. Where the moral sense is entire, there must be a sense of religion; and, if a man, who has no sense of religion, live decently in society, he is more indebted for his conduct to good temper, than to sound morals.—*Lord Kames' Sketches of Man*, vi. 344.

They that cry down moral honesty, cry down that which is a great part of religion, my duty toward God, and my duty toward man. What care I to see a man run after a sermon, if he cozens and cheats as soon as he comes home. On the other side, morality must not

be without religion; for, if so, it may change as I see convenient. Religion must govern it. He that has not religion to govern his morality, is not a dram better than my mastiff dog. So long as you stroke him, and please him, and do not pinch him, he will play with you as finely as may be; he is a very good moral mastiff; but if you hurt him, he will fly in your face, and tear out your throat.—*Selden's Table Talk*, 112.

Philosophy, on its own principles, cannot be productive of any virtue, which does not flow from religion; and religion is productive of many virtues, to which philosophy is a stranger. As to practice, it is another thing, and remains to be examined. There is no man who practises in every particular the doctrine of his religion, when he has one, that is true; the greater part of mankind have hardly any religion at all, and practise nothing of what little they have: this also is very true; but, after all, some people have religion, and practise it at least in part, and it is incontestible that motives of religion prevent them often from falling into vice, and excite to virtuous and commendable actions, which they had not performed but for such motives. Let a priest be guilty of a breach of trust, what does this prove, but that a blockhead had confided in him? If Pascal himself had done it, this would have proved Pascal a hypocrite; nothing more.—*Rousseau's Emilius*, vol. ii. p. 227, note.

In effect, the immortality of heaven has no relation to the rewards and punishments, of which we form an idea on this earth. The sentiment, which makes us aspire to immortality, is as disinterested as that which makes us find our happiness in devoting ourselves to the happiness of others; for the first offering to religious felicity is the sacrifice of self; and it is thus necessarily removed from every species of selfishness. Whatever we may attempt, we must re-

turn to the acknowledgment, that religion is the true foundation of morality ; it is that sensible and real object within us, which can alone divert our attention from external objects. If piety did not excite sublime emotions, who would sacrifice even sensual pleasures, however vulgar they might be, to the cold dignity of reason ? We must begin the internal history of man with religion, or with sensation ; for there is nothing animated besides.—*De Stael's Germany*, iii. 209.

SECTION III.

MORALITY FOUNDED ON THE WILL OF GOD.

AMONGST the opinions, then, which it highly concerns all men to settle and to embrace, the chief are those which relate to Almighty God, as the great Creator and Governor of the universe. That there is really existing a Supreme Being, from whom all other things derive their original, and the principle of their motion, not as from a dull and senseless power, (as the weight, for example, in a block,) but as from a cause endowed with understanding and with freedom of choice. That this Eternal Being exercises a sovereignty, not only over the whole world, or over mankind in general, but over every individual human person, whose knowledge nothing can escape ; who, by virtue of his imperial right, hath enjoined men such certain duties by natural law, the observance of which will meet with his approbation, the breach or the neglect with his displeasure ; and that he will, for this purpose, require an exact account from every man of his proceedings, without corruption and without partiality.

Now, as the main parts of human duty turn on this belief, so it is the only foundation of the sweet tranquillity and acquiescence of mind, which men inwardly enjoy, and the very fence and bulwark of all that probity, which we are to exercise towards our neighbour; without which no man can seriously and heartily do a good action himself, or give sufficient caution and security of his honest intentions to others. And, although it appears from the ordinances of the Christian religion, that God is not so far pleased with every kind of worship which men pay him, as to embrace them with peculiar favour, and to give them a title to eternal life; which good effects do follow only that institution and way of service, which he hath revealed in a singular manner to the world. Yet a serious persuasion concerning the divine existence and providence, under whatever particular apprehension or particular worship, hath, however, thus much of force and efficacy, as to render men more observant of their duty. To prove this assertion, we need only consider, that there have been of old, and still are, men professing religions, which we must own to be destructive to salvation, as suppose Mahometans or Pagans, who nevertheless, by virtue of their persuasion of God's providence, have shewn no inconsiderable concern and care for honesty and justice, so as not to be outdone by many Christians, at least as to external performances. As this persuasion, and whatever else we are able to learn concerning the worship of God, either from reason or revelation, is, first of all, to be implanted in a rightly cultivated mind; so are the opinions contrary to these truths most carefully to be barred off and excluded. And here we would not only be understood of atheistical and Epicurean principles, but of all those numerous notions which appear to be destructive of true religion, of good manners, and

of human society, which it is in an high manner the interest of mankind to see absolutely rooted up and banished out of the world.—*Puffendorf's Law of Nature and Nations*, Book ii. chap. iv. sec. 3.

To judge of the rectitude of actions, the first rule is, the divine law, whereby I mean that law which God hath set to the actions of men, whether promulgated to them by the light of nature, or the voice of revelation. That God has given a rule, whereby men should govern themselves, I think there is nobody so brutish as to deny. He has a right to do it: we are his creatures: he has goodness and wisdom to direct our actions to that which is best; and he has power to enforce it by rewards and punishments, of infinite weight and duration, in another life; for nobody can take us out of his hands. This is the only true touchstone of moral rectitude; and, by comparing them to this law, it is, that men judge of the most considerable moral good or evil of their actions; that is, whether as duties, or sins, they are like to procure them happiness or misery from the hands of the Almighty.—*Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding*, vol. ii. book ii. chap. 28.

The regard to those general rules of conduct, is what is properly called a sense of duty, a principle of the greatest consequence in human life, and the only principle by which the bulk of mankind are capable of directing their actions. Without this sacred regard to general rules, there is no man whose conduct can be much depended upon. It is this which constitutes the most essential difference between a man of principle and honour, and a worthless fellow. The one adheres, on all occasions, steadily and resolutely to his maxims, and preserves, the whole of his life, one even tenor of conduct. The other acts variously and accidentally, as humour, inclination, or interest, chance to

to be uppermost. This reverence (for these general rules of moral conduct) is still farther enhanced by an opinion, which is first impressed by nature, and afterwards confirmed by reasoning and philosophy, that those important rules of morality are the commands and laws of the Deity, who will finally reward the obedient, and punish the transgressors of their duty. These natural hopes and fears and suspicions were propagated by sympathy, and confirmed by education; and the gods were universally represented and believed to be the rewarders of humanity and mercy, and the avengers of perfidy and injustice. And thus religion, even in its rudest form, gave a sanction to the rules of morality, long before the age of artificial reasoning and philosophy. That the terrors of religion should thus enforce the natural sense of duty, was of too much importance to the happiness of mankind, for nature to leave it dependent upon the slowness and uncertainty of philosophical researches*. These researches, however, when they came to take place, confirmed those original anticipations of nature. Upon whatever we suppose that our moral faculties are founded, whether upon a certain modification of reason, upon an original instinct, called a moral sense, or upon some other principle of our nature, it cannot be doubted that they were given us for the direction of our conduct in this life. Since these, therefore, were plainly intended to be the governing principles of human nature, the rules which they prescribe are to be regarded as the commands and laws of the Dei-

* There is an obvious vagueness in the language of Dr. Smith, on this subject of what nature teaches; and either he must have considered the idea of a Deity to be innate in the human mind, or it must follow (on his principle of that idea having been so prevalent and powerful, previous to the influence of reasoning and philosophy) that it had been imparted by some original revelation, and preserved by means of human tradition.

ty, promulgated by those vicegerents which he has set up within us. All general rules are commonly denominated laws: thus the general rules, which bodies observe in communication of motion, are called the laws of motion. But these general rules, which our moral faculties observe in approving or condemning whatever sentiment or action is subjected to their examination, may much more justly be denominated such. They have a much greater resemblance to what are properly called laws, those general rules, which the sovereign lays down to direct the conduct of his subjects. Like them they are rules to direct the free actions of men; they are prescribed, most surely, by a lawful superior, and are attended too with the sanction of rewards and punishments: Those vicegerents of God within never fail to punish the violation of them by the torments of inward shame and self-condemnation; and, on the contrary, always reward obedience with tranquillity of mind, with contentment, and self-satisfaction. There are, besides, many other reasons, and many other natural principles, which all tend to confirm and inculcate the same salutary doctrine.—When the general rules, which determine the merit and demerit of actions, come thus to be regarded as the laws of an all-powerful Being, who watches over our conduct, and who, in a life to come, will reward the observance, and punish the breach of them, they necessarily acquire a new sacredness from this consideration. That our regard to the will of the Deity ought to be the supreme rule of our conduct, can be doubted of by nobody who believes his existence. The very thought of disobedience appears to involve in it the most shocking impropriety. How vain, how absurd, would it be for man, either to oppose or to neglect the commands, that were laid upon him by infinite wisdom and infinite power! How unnatural,

how impiously ungrateful, not to reverence the precepts, that were prescribed to him by the infinite goodness of his Creator, even though no punishment was to follow their violation? The sense of propriety too is here well supported by the strongest motives of self-interest. The idea, that, however we may escape the observation of men, or be placed above the reach of human punishment, yet we are always acting under the eye and exposed to the punishment of God, the great avenger of injustice, is a motive capable of restraining the most headstrong passions, with those at least, who, by constant reflection, have rendered it familiar to them.

It is in this manner, that religion enforces the natural sense of duty; and hence it is, that mankind are generally disposed to place great confidence in the probity of those, who seem deeply impressed with religious sentiments. Such persons, they imagine, act under an additional tie, besides those which regulate the conduct of other men. The regard to the propriety of action, as well as to reputation, the regard to the applause of his own breast, as well as to that of others, are motives which they suppose have the same influence over the religious man, as over the man of the world. But the former lies under another restraint, and never acts deliberately, but as in the presence of that great Superior, who is finally to recompense him according to his deeds. A greater trust is reposed, upon this account, in the regularity and exactness of his conduct. And wherever the natural principles of religion are not corrupted by the factions and party zeal of some worthless cabal; wherever the first duty which it requires, is to fulfil all the obligations of morality; wherever men are not taught to regard frivolous observances as more immediate duties of religion, than acts of justice and beneficence; and to imagine that by sacrifices and ceremonies, and vain supplica-

tions, they can bargain with the Deity for fraud, and perfidy, and violence, the world undoubtedly judges right in this respect, and justly places a double confidence in the rectitude of the religious man's behaviour.—*Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments*, vol. i. p. 402, &c.

It was extremely simple to rise from the study of nature to the inquiry after its Author. As soon as we attained this point, we perceived that we had gained a considerable ascendant over our pupil, and found new ways to address ourselves to his heart. Then only does he find it his interest to be virtuous, to do good actions without any regard to man, and, without being compelled by the laws, to be just between God and himself; to discharge his duty even at the expense of his life; and even to bear the image of virtue imprinted in his heart, not only from the love of order, to which every man prefers that of himself; but from the love of his Creator, which is mingled with the love of himself, to the end that he may enjoy that lasting felicity in the other life, of which a good conscience, and the contemplation of a Supreme Being, are sure pledges in this. If I depart from this point, I see nothing left but injustice, falsehood, and hypocrisy; self-interest, prevailing over every other competition, teaches every man to disguise his vices under the cloak and mask of virtue. Let the rest of mankind do my business at their own expense; let every thing be referred to me alone as its ultimate end; let all mankind perish in pain and misery, to save me a moment's uneasiness, or a little hunger; such is the language, which the atheist and the unbeliever makes use of to himself. Yes, I shall maintain it all my life, whoever says in his heart there is no God, and makes use of a different language, is either a liar or madman.—*Rousseau's Emilius*, vol. ii. p. 230.

CHAPTER III.

TESTIMONIES TO THE PRINCIPLES OF NATURAL RELIGION.

SECTION I.

EXISTENCE AND AGENCY OF GOD.

IMPORTANCE OF THE BELIEF OF A GOD.—That there is a God! How is it possible to avoid being penetrated with an awful respect in uttering these words? How reflect on them without the deepest humility, and even an emotion of surprise, that man, this weak creature, this atom dispersed in the immensity of space, undertakes to add some weight to a truth, of which all nature is the splendid witness?

However, if this truth is our supreme good,—if we are nothing without it, how can we banish it from our minds? Does it not constrain us to dwell continually on the subject? Compared with it, all other thoughts are insignificant and uninteresting: it gives birth to, and sustains all the sentiments on which the happiness of an intelligent creature depends.—*Necker's Religious Opinions*, p. 278.

THE BELIEF OF A GOD FOUNDED IN REASON.—As every inquiry, which regards religion, is of the utmost importance, there are two questions, in particular, which challenge our attention, to wit, that concerning its foundation in reason, and that concerning its origin in human nature. Happily, the first question, which is the most important, admits of the most obvious, at least the clearest solution. The whole frame of nature bespeaks an intelligent author; and no rational inquirer can, after serious reflection, suspend his belief a moment with regard to the primary principles of genuine Theism and Religion.—*Hume's Essays*, vol. ii. 401. Edit. 1800.

Every thing well weighed on both sides, (of the atheistical and theistical arguments,) I must declare, without prejudice, (as far as I can be without prejudice,) that the system of the existence of a God, or of a supreme intelligent being, architect of the universe, and of all that it contains, sovereign legislator of nature, who has endued us with an understanding above that of all the other creatures known to us, and with a liberty of thinking and comparing what is good and what is evil relatively to our being; that this system, I say, appears to me infinitely more reasonable than that of our author*: I say more, it is impossible for me to doubt of it.—*Sir James Stewart's Works*, vi. p. 64.

THE BELIEF OF A GOD CONFIRMED BY SCIENCE.—I am saying nothing here, that I am not accustomed to urge at much greater length, in the course of my professional duty†. And I do not think, that I am justly

* Mirabaud's "Système de la Nature."

† The author was professor of natural philosophy in the university of Edinburgh.

chargeable with vanity, when I suppose, that many years of delightful study of the works of God have given me somewhat more acquaintance with them, than is probably attained by those who never think of the matter, being continually engaged in the bustle of life. Should one of this description say, that all is fate or chance, and that the same thing happens to all, &c. as is but too common, I should think that a prudent man will give so much preference to *my* assertion, as at least to think seriously about the thing, before he allow himself any indulgence in things, which I affirm to be highly dangerous to his future peace and happiness.—*Robison's Proofs of a Conspiracy*, 492.

But surely to us, the scholars of Newton, the futility of this attempt is abundantly manifest. As the worthy pupils of our accomplished teacher, we will join with him in considering universal gravitation as a noble proof of the existence and superintendance of a supreme mind, and a conspicuous mark of its transcendent wisdom.—*Robison's Elem. of Mechan. Phil.* vol. i. p. 694.

Of the various distinctions, which characterize philosophy, there are none, which deserve so much your attention, as those which separate what is true from what is false: from these you will learn, that those men, who assume the name of philosophers to countenance infidelity and licentiousness, are not less enemies to philosophy, than to divinity. The mind of *that man*, who conceives so falsely of the divine oracles, as to believe that they oppose true and useful learning, has been debauched by sophistical reasonings, or debased by grovelling and unworthy pursuits. Sacred writ arms us indeed against *vain* philosophy, and all the empty fictions of the human imagination, which bring forth neither pleasure nor

profit, but then it invites you, in the sublimest strains, to consider the works of God, whose counsels and perfections, as they are displayed in the *creatures*, will ever be best understood by those, who study *them* with humility and attention.

Learning and philosophy never shone more bright, than when they met with faith and religion in the mind of the excellent Lord Bacon ; whose opinion it was that the wonderful works of God *do minister a singular help and preservation against infidelity and error*. If there be any philosophers so void of understanding as to regard the science of nature only as a tower of state for a proud mind to raise itself upon, and to esteem themselves licentiates in infidelity, because they make some figure in philosophy, it may possibly do them some good to look back upon the example of this great man, who preserved a mind unstained with the pride of heresy and infidelity ; and was not more to be admired for his extensive learning and experience in the ways of nature, than for his theological skill and penetration into the wisdom of the sacred writings. “ There are,” says he, “ two books, or volumes of study, laid before us, if “ we will be secured from error ; first, the scriptures, “ revealing the will of God, and then the creatures, “ expressing his power ; whereof the latter is a key “ unto the former : they are both written by the “ finger of the one eternal God.”

In these we are taught, that the same God who created the world in wisdom, *upholds* it in mercy ; that in him we live, and move, and have our being. If the sun gives us light and warmth, it is *his sun*, which he maketh to rise on the evil and the good. If the clouds pour down their water upon our fields, to nourish and bring forward the fruits of the earth, it is he that *sendeth rain* on the just and unjust. To

him, therefore, the blessings, that are dispensed to us in the ordinary course of nature, are to be devoutly ascribed, as to the primary source of all life and motion. This conclusion will be equally true, whether God is supposed to distribute the benefits of nature from his own hand immediately, or by the mediation of secondary causes of his own appointing; for, either way, the real government of the whole can only terminate in himself.—*Adams' Lectures on Natural Philosophy*, i. 240.

AGENCY OF DEITY IN NATURE.—After what has been said, it is hardly necessary to take notice of the absurdity of that opinion, or rather of that mode of speaking, which seems to refer the order of the universe to *general laws*, operating as *efficient causes*. Absurd, however, as it is, there is reason to suspect that it has, with many, had the effect of keeping the Deity out of view, while they were studying his works.—*Stewart's Philosophy of the Human Mind*, ii. 212.

MARKS OF DESIGN IN CREATION.—A purpose, an intention, a design, strikes every where the most careless, the most stupid thinker; and no man can be so hardened in absurd systems, as at all times to reject it. *That nature does nothing in vain*, is a maxim established in all the schools, merely from the contemplation of the works of nature, without any religious purpose; and from a firm conviction of its truth, an anatomist, who had observed a new organ or canal, would never be satisfied till he had also discovered its use and intention. One great foundation of the Copernican system is the maxim, *That nature acts by the simplest methods, and chooses the most proper means to any end*; and astronomers

often, without thinking of it, lay this strong foundation of piety and religion. The same thing is observable in other parts of philosophy: And thus all the sciences lead us almost insensibly to acknowledge a first intelligent author; and their authority is often so much the greater, as they do not directly profess that intention.—*Hume's Posthumous Dialogues.*

These is a certain character or *style*, (if I may use the expression,) in the operations of Divine Wisdom; something, which every where announces, amidst an infinite variety of detail, an inimitable unity and harmony of design; and, in the perception of which, *philosophical sagacity and genius* seem chiefly to consist. I shall only add to what has been now stated on the head of analogy, that the numberless references and dependencies between the material and the moral worlds, exhibited within the narrow sphere of our observation on this globe, encourage and even authorise us to conclude, that they both form parts of one and the same plan; a conclusion congenial to the best and noblest principles of our nature, and which all the discoveries of genuine science unite in confirming. Nothing, indeed, could be more inconsistent with that irresistible disposition, which prompts every philosophical inquirer to argue from the known to the unknown, than to suppose that, while all the different bodies, which compose the *material* universe, are manifestly related to each other, as parts of a connected *whole*, the *moral* events, which happen on our planet are quite insulated; and that the rational beings, who inhabit it, and for whom we may reasonably presume it was brought into existence, have no relation whatever to other intelligent and moral natures. The presumption unquestionably is, that there is one great *moral system*, corresponding to the *material system*; and that the connexions, which we

at present trace so distinctly among the sensible objects composing the one, are exhibited as so many intimations of some vast scheme, comprehending all the intelligent beings, who compose the other. In this argument, as well as in numberless others, which analogy suggests in favour of our future prospects, the evidence is precisely of the same sort with that which first encouraged Newton to extend his physical speculations beyond the limits of the earth.—*Stewart's Philosophy of the Human Mind*, ii. 395, 398.

GLORY OF GOD THE END OF CREATION. —First, the testimony of Scripture makes God, in all his actions, to intend and design his own glory mainly, Prov. xvi. 4. *God made all things for himself*. How! for himself? he hath no need of them; he hath no use of them. No; he made them for the manifestation of his power, wisdom, and goodness, and that he might receive from the creatures, that were able to take notice thereof, his tribute of praise. Ps. l. 14. *Offer unto God thanksgiving*; and, in the next verse, *I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me*. And again, in the last verse, *Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me*; so praise is called a sacrifice, and *the calves of the lips*. Hos. xiv. 2. Isa. xlii. 8. *I am the Lord, that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another*. Isa. xlviii. 2. *And I will not give my glory to another*. The Scripture calls upon the heavens and earth, and sun, moon, and stars, and all other creatures, to praise the Lord, that is, by the mouth of man, (as I shewed before,) who is hereby required to take notice of all those creatures, and to admire and praise the power, wisdom, and goodness of God, manifested in the creation and designation of them. Secondly, it is most reasonable that God Almighty should intend his own glory; for he being infinite

in all excellencies and perfections, and independent upon any other being, nothing can be said or thought of him too great, and which he may not justly challenge as his due; nay, he cannot think too highly of himself, his other attributes being adequate to his understanding; so that, though his understanding be infinite, yet he understands no more than his power can effect, because that is infinite also. And, therefore, it is fit and reasonable, that he should own and accept the creature's acknowledgments and celebration of those virtues and perfections, which he hath not received of any other, but possesseth eternally and originally of himself.—*Ray's Wisdom of God in the Creation*, part i. p. 169.

SECTION II.

PERFECTIONS OF GOD.

GENERAL VIEW OF GOD'S PERFECTIONS.—This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent powerful Being. This Being governs all things, not as the soul of the world, but as Lord over all; and on account of his dominion he is wont to be called Lord God, *παντοκράτωρ*, an universal ruler, for God is a relative word, and has a respect to servants; and deity is the dominion of God, not over his own body, as those imagine, who fancy God to be the soul of the world, but over servants. The supreme God is a being, eternal, infinite, absolutely perfect; but a being, however perfect, without dominion, cannot be said to be Lord God; for we say,

my God, your God, the God of Israel, the God of Gods, Lord of Lords ; but we do not say, my eternal, your eternal, the eternal of Israel, the eternal of Gods ; we do not say, my infinite or my perfect. These are titles which have no respect to servants. The word God usually signifies Lord ; but every lord is not a god. It is the dominion of a spiritual being, which constitutes a god ; a true, supreme, or imaginary dominion makes a true, supreme, or imaginary god. And from his true dominion, it follows that the true God is a living, intelligent, and powerful being ; and from his other perfections, that he is supreme, and most perfect. He is eternal and infinite, omnipotent and omniscient ; that is, his duration reaches from eternity to eternity, his presence from infinity to infinity : he governs all things, and knows all things that are or can be done. He is not eternity or infinity, but eternal and infinite. He is not duration or space, but he endures and is present. He endures for ever, and is every where present ; and by existing always and every where, he constitutes duration and space. Since every particle of space is *always*, and every indivisible moment of duration is every *where*, certainly the maker and Lord of all things cannot be *never* or *no where*. Every soul that has perception, is, though in different times, or different organs of sense and motion, still the same indivisible person. There are given successive parts in duration, co-existent parts in space ; but neither the one nor the other in the person of a man, or his thinking principle ; and much less can they be found in the thinking substance of God. Every man, so far as he is a thing that has preception, is one and the same man during his whole life, in all and each of his organs of sense. God is the same God always, and every where. He is omnipresent, not *virtually* only, but also *substan-*

tially; for virtue cannot subsist without substance. In him are all things contained and moved; yet neither affects the other: God suffers nothing from the motion of bodies; bodies find no resistance from the omnipresence of God. It is allowed by all, that the supreme God exists necessarily; and by the same necessity he exists *always* and *every where*. Whence also he is all similar, all eye, all ear, all brain, all arm, all power to perceive, to understand, and to act; but in a manner not at all human, in a manner not at all corporeal, in a manner utterly unknown to us. As a blind man has no idea of colours, so have we no idea of the manner by which the all wise God perceives, and understands all things. He is utterly void of all body and bodily figure; and can, therefore, neither be seen, nor heard, nor touched; nor ought he to be worshipped under the representation of any corporeal thing. We have ideas of his attributes; but what the real substance of any thing is we know not. In bodies, we see only their figures and colours, we hear only the sounds, we touch only their outward surfaces, we smell only the smells, and taste the savours; but their inward substances are not to be known, either by our senses, or by any reflex act of our minds: much less then, have we any idea of the substance of God. We know him only by his most wise and excellent contrivances of things and final causes; we admire him for his perfections; but we reverence and adore him on account of his dominion; for we adore him as his servants; and a God without dominion, providence, and final causes, is nothing else but fate and nature. Blind metaphysical necessity, which is certainly the same always, and every where, could produce no variety of things. All that diversity of things, which we find suited to different times and places, could arise from nothing but the ideas and will of a Being ne-

cessarily existing. But, by way of allegory, God is said to see, to speak, to laugh, to love, to hate, to desire, to give, to receive, to rejoice, to be angry, to fight, to form, to work, to build ; for all our notions of God are taken from the ways of mankind, by a certain similitude, which, though not perfect, has some likeness however.—*Newton's Principia*, ii. 311.

Wisdom, as an attribute of God, may be said to be infinite ; the proper meaning of this expression being, that the wisdom of God is perfect, that is to say, without any mixture, alloy, or participation of either ignorance or folly, as is always the case with human wisdom, which is imperfect. Therefore the infinite wisdom of God is not to be compared with the wisdom of man, although our conception or idea of the one is only founded on that of the other. In like manner, the goodness or benevolence of God is an attribute, which may be considered as infinite ; which expression will then mean, that this attribute is perfect in the Being which thus possesses this quality, without any of the opposite. This will also appear to be a thing perfectly different from that attribute or quality in a human mind, which is occasionally more or less subject to malevolence, or the willing of evil.

Power, which is an attribute of God, may be considered as infinite ; not that, in consequence of this power, God can be supposed to do that which is impossible ; it is only meant, that God must have power to do whatever is possible to be done. In this case, possible and impossible mean no more than conceivable and inconceivable. But here a distinction must be made with regard to two different expressions, which by inattention might be confounded, impossible means that which we cannot conceive. This, however, must be distinguished as very different from that which we *do not conceive*. We can conceive

much more than we do ; indeed, we conceive but little of that which is possible ; but, we must necessarily consider as impossible, that which we are conscious is inconceivable, as implying a contradiction or absurdity. Consequently, that power which is attributed to God, although this be conceived from the power of which we are conscious, it differs from the power of man *toto cœlo*, that is, perfectly ; the one is finite, the other is infinite.—*Hutton's Investigation*, iii. 651.

FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD.—It is agreed, I believe, upon all hands, that in the universe, there is no such thing as actual evil. It is also agreed, that God governs the universe by fixed and determinate laws ; the absolute perfection of which he has from all eternity foreseen. Nothing happens without a cause ; no cause can exist without producing an effect. The perspicuity with which God discerns the connexions and relations between causes and their effects, conveys the idea of his sublime omnipotence, and of his foreknowledge. This reflection ought to abolish the childish difficulties we start to ourselves, concerning the possibility of his foreseeing the actions of free agents. What action can possibly exist, which does not enter into the great succession of causes and effects ? In consequence of this principle of universal dependence between causes and their effects, it may be said, that happiness is an effect of virtue, that unhappiness is the effect of vice. It is not here advanced, that this happiness or unhappiness are to be ranged in the class of immediate consequence. It is sufficient they be certain ; and as certain it is, that did we see into the more sublime operations of the divine economy, with the same perspicuity, that we behold and feel the familiar consequences of moral actions in this world, we

should clearly perceive the natural connexion between the whole suit of human actions, from the creation of the species to the extinction of it ; and the rewards and punishments, which God has prepared for them. —*Sir James Steuart's Works*, vol. vi. p. 90.

THE UNSEARCHABLENESS OF GOD'S PERFECTIONS. —That Being, whose will is his deed, whose principle of action is in himself ; that Being, in a word, whatever it be, that gives motion to all the parts of the universe, and governs all things, I call GOD. To this term I annex the ideas of intelligence, power, and will, which I have collected from the order of things ; and to these I add, that of goodness, which is a necessary consequence of their union : but I am not at all the wiser concerning the essence of the Being, to whom I give these attributes ; he remains at an equal distance from my senses, and my understanding. The more I think of him, the more I am confounded. I know, of a certainty, that he exists, and that his existence is independent of any of his creatures. I know also, that my existence is dependent on him, and that every thing I know is in the same situation with myself. I perceive the Deity in all his works, I feel him within me, and behold him in every object around me ; but I no sooner endeavour to contemplate what he is in himself ; I no sooner inquire where he is, and what is his substance, than he eludes the strongest efforts of my imagination ; and my bewildered understanding is convinced of its own weakness.—God is intelligent ; but in what manner ? Man is intelligent by the act of reasoning ; but the supreme intelligence lies under no necessity to reason. He requires neither premises nor consequences ; not even the simple form of a proposition. His knowledge is purely intuitive. He be-

holds equally what is and what will be. All truths are to him as one idea, as all places are but one point, and all times one moment. Human power acts by the use of means; the divine power, in and of itself. God is powerful, because he is willing, his will constituting his power. God is good; nothing is more manifest than this truth. Goodness in man, however, consists in a love to his fellow-creatures; the goodness of God in a love of order: for it is on such order that the connexion and preservation of all things depend. Again, God is just; this I am fully convinced of, as it is the natural consequence of his goodness. The injustice of men is their own work, not his; and that moral disorder, which, in the judgment of some philosophers, makes against the system of providence, is in man the strongest argument for it. Justice in man, indeed, is to render every one his due; but the justice of God requires, at the hands of every one, an account of the talents, with which he has entrusted them. In short, the greater efforts I make to contemplate his infinite essence, the less I am able to conceive it; but I am certain that he is, and that is sufficient: the more he surpasses my conception, the more I adore him. I humble myself before him, and say, "Being of beings, I am, because thou art: to meditate continually on thee, is to elevate my thoughts to the fountain of excellence. 'The most meritorious use of my reason is to be annihilated before thee: it is the delight of my soul to feel my weak faculties overcome by the splendour of thy greatness.'"—*Rousseau's Emilius*, ii. 145. 164.

That there is a God every thing indicates, and loudly announces; but I cannot discover either the mysteries of his essence, or the intimate connexion of his various perfections. I plainly see in a crowd the monarch encircled by his guards; I know his laws;

I enjoy the order he has prescribed ; but I assist not at his counsels, and am a stranger to his deliberations. I even perceive, that an impenetrable veil separates me from the designs of the supreme Being ; and I do not undertake to trace them. I commit myself with confidence to the protection of that Being, whom I believe good and great, as I would rely on the guidance of a friend during a dark night ; and whilst I have my foot on the abyss, I will depend on him to snatch me from the danger, and calm my terrors.—*Necker's Religious Opinions*, 359.

What we have said may be sufficient to shew the high veneration our intellects owe to God, since he may have other attributes and perfections we know not of ; and since we have but a dim and shallow knowledge of those attributes of his, viz. his wisdom and power, and may discern that there is an unbounded extent of perfection beyond our abilities to perceive ; and therefore such imperfect creatures ought not to talk hastily and confidently of God, considering our inestimable inferiority to such a Being ; and therefore our ignorance ought to teach us devotion, that ignorance proceeding from the number and incomprehensibility of his excellencies, so that our knowledge only helps us the more to admire his perfections. Therefore it must be the highest presumption to talk of God's knowledge, as if we were able to look through and measure it ; whereas we ought, when we mention his attributes, to be aware lest we misrepresent them, and not to entertain a fond opinion of our sufficiency, the notions we have of God being rather suited to our limited faculties, than equal to his boundless perfections. Those intellectual beings, the angels, though their minds are illuminated with extensive knowledge, are desirous to pry into the mysteries of the gospel ; whence it appears they

are far from prying (penetrating) into the depths of God, or from comprehending his nature. And, thus, in the majestic vision before Isaiah, they are represented as attendants about God's throne, covering their faces with their wings, as not able to behold the dazzling brightness of his majesty. How then should we mortals, infinitely beneath him, degenerated by sin, and the imperfections of our inferior nature, talk irreverently of the divine essence and perfections, not regarding the immense difference betwixt God and us, being unable to search into his adorable nature. We had much better, with the Psalmist, confess, "such knowledge is too wonderful for me ; it is high, I cannot attain unto it ;" and celebrate that God, whose glorious name is exalted above all blessing and praise.—*Hon. Robert Boyle's Theological Works.*

I own freely to you the weakness of my understanding, that, though it be unquestionable that there is omnipotence and omniscience in God, our maker, and I cannot have a clearer perception of any thing than that I am free ; yet I cannot make freedom in man consistent with omnipotence and omniscience in God, though I am as fully persuaded of both, as of any truth I most firmly assent to. And, therefore, I have long given up the consideration of that question, resolving all into this short conclusion, that if it be possible for God to make a free agent, then man is free, though I see not the way of it.—*Locke's Works,* viii. 305.

IMPORTANCE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.—The first part of piety is, to form right notions of God, as the greatest, wisest, and best of Beings. All men, who are capable of reflection, must be sensible that this is a matter of infinite importance ; for, if our opinions concerning him are erroneous, our sentiments of

the duty we owe him must be so too, and our whole moral nature must be perverted. Every considerate person, therefore, will be careful to obtain the fullest information possible, with respect to the divine existence and attributes. To be indifferent about this, which is beyond comparison the most important part of knowledge, is inexcusable; and the ignorance is criminal, which proceeds from such indifference. And, if ignorance of God was without excuse in some ancient heathen nations, as the Scripture warrants us to believe, it must be highly criminal in us, who, both from reason and from revelation, have the best means of knowing who God is, and what he requires us to believe concerning him.—*Beattie's Elements of Moral Science*, ii. 79.

The whole world may be divided into these three ranks and orders of men; those who, having found God, resign themselves up to his service; those who, having not yet found him, do indefatigably search after him; and, lastly, those who have neither found him, nor are inclined to seek him. The first are happy and wise: the third are unhappy and fools: the second must be owned to be wise, as they own themselves to be unhappy.—*M. Pascal's Thoughts*, page 237.

SECTION III.

PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

GENERAL PROVIDENCE OF GOD.—The doctrine of providence, general and particular, may be considered as a consequence from the foregoing attributes and appellations of the divine nature. By general providence, I mean the adjusting all events to the greatest good of the whole ; by particular, the adjusting all to the greatest good of each individual ; and, consequently, by both together, the adjusting the greatest good of the whole, and of each individual to each other ; so that both shall fall exactly upon the same point. However difficult this may seem, I take it to be the genuine consequence of the foregoing proposition. Infinite power, knowledge, and goodness, must make our most kind and merciful Father both able and willing to effect this : it does, therefore, actually take place, though we cannot see it. However, that there are many marks both of general and particular providence, as thus explained, is sufficiently evident, and acknowledged by all : both these appear also to be asserted in the Scriptures.—*Hartley's Observations on Man*, ii. 44.

PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE OF GOD.—I wonder at this, but I cannot therefore part with the comfortable belief of a Divine Providence ; and the more I see the impossibility, from the number and extent of his crimes, of giving equivalent punishment to a wicked man in this life, the more I am convinced of a future state, in which all, that here appears to be wrong, shall be set right, all that is crooked made straight.

In this faith let you and I, my dear friend, comfort ourselves. It is the only comfort in the present dark scene of things that is allowed us.—*Franklin's Private Correspondence*, i. 116.

Why should I not now speak as I really think, or why be guilty of ingratitude, which my heart disclaims? I escaped by the providence and protection of heaven; and so little store do I set upon the advantage of my own experience, that I am satisfied, were I to attempt the same journey again, it would not avail me a straw, or hinder me from perishing miserably, as others have done, though perhaps in a different way.—*Bruce's Travels in Abyssinia, Introduction*, i. 77.

God, therefore, who is every where present, and “who filleth the heavens and the earth, whose eyes are upon the righteous, and his countenance against them that do evil,” was therefore, by Orpheus, called *an infinite eye*, beholding all things; and cannot therefore be esteemed as an idle looker-on, as if he had transferred his power to any other, for it is contrary to his own word; “I will not give my glory to another.”—God, therefore, who could only be the cause of all, can only provide for all, and sustain all; so as to absolute power, to every-where-presence, to perfect goodness, to pure and divine love, this attribute, transcendent hability of providence, is only proper and belonging.—*Sir Walter Raleigh's History of the World*.

But, after all, on what is this important proposition, that the Almighty has absolutely abandoned all sublunary things to the direction of chance, founded? Why, just on this, that none of our wise men have seen any miracles wrought of late times: and they are not disposed to think it possible, that any could have been wrought in the more early; and it is a truth, not to be contested, that the unjust succeed in this world, fully as well as the just. But, if they

were to be asked, whether they are certain, that no cause has interposed in the producing any event, but what they have observed? and whether they are sure, that there are no secret springs in providence, unseen and unthought of by them, to which important events are owing? if they would not be laughed at, they must answer in the negative; which is enough to destroy the certainty of their position.—*President Forbes's Reflections on Incredulity.*

EXISTENCE OF EVIL CONSISTENT WITH THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD.—Therefore, in philosophy, it is no paradox to say, that evil is good, although such an expression, in common sense, would be absurd. It is the difference betwixt the consideration of generals and particulars, that forms this apparent inconsistency. On the one hand, it is only the particular, which is properly or truly evil; the general of evil is truly good. Thus, for example, it is evil for me, when the fire happens to burn my hand, or when my conscience punishes me in repentance; but it is good for me and every other animal, that fire should give pain in burning; this is the general, and it is good. In like manner, it is good for me and all mankind, that conscience should give misery in remorse. Therefore, the general of evil is always good. On the other hand, the particular of good is always good; even when evil happens, in being the improper consequence; and sophistry itself cannot make the general of good appear evil.—*Hutton's Investigation*, iii. 459.

There remains only one objection more to be considered, namely, that it would have been better not to create such spirits, as God foresaw they must sink into criminality. But this far surpasses human understanding; for we know not whether the plan of the world could subsist without them. We know, on the

contrary, by experience, that the wickedness of some men frequently contributes to the correction and amendment of others, and thereby conducts them to happiness. This consideration, alone, is sufficient to justify the existence of evil spirits. And, as God has all power over the consequences of human wickedness, every one may rest assured, that, in conforming to the commandments of God, all events which come to pass, however calamitous they may appear to him, are always under the direction of Providence, and finally terminate in his true happiness.

This providence of God, which extends to every individual, in particular, thus furnishes the most satisfactory solution of the question respecting the permission and the origin of evil. This likewise is the foundation of all religion, the alone object of which is to promote the salvation of mankind.—*Euler's Letters to a German Princess*, i. 390.

Almost all the moral good, which is left among us, is the apparent effect of physical evil. Goodness is divided by divines into soberness, righteousness, and godliness. Let it be examined how each of these duties would be practised, if there were no physical evil to enforce it.

Sobriety, or temperance, is nothing but the forbearance of pleasure; and, if pleasure was not followed by pain, who would forbear it? We see every hour those, in whom the desire of present interest overpowers all sense of past, and all foresight of future misery. In a remission of the gout, the drunkard returns to his wine, and the glutton to his feast; and, if neither disease nor poverty were felt or dreaded, every one would sink down in idle sensuality, without any care of others or of himself. To eat and drink, and to lie down to sleep, would be the whole business of mankind.

Righteousness, or the system of social duty, may be subdivided into justice and charity. Of justice, one of the heathen sages has shewn, with great acuteness, that it was impressed upon mankind only by the inconveniences which injustice had produced. "In the first ages," says he, "men acted without any rule but the impulse of desire; they practised injustice upon others, and suffered it from others, in their turn; but in time it was discovered, that the pain of suffering wrong, was greater than the pleasure of doing it; and mankind, by a general compact, submitted to the restraint of laws, and resigned the pleasure to escape the pain." Of charity it is superfluous to observe, that it could have no place, if there were no want; for, of a virtue that could not be practised, the omission could not be culpable. Evil is not only the occasional, but the efficient cause of charity; we are invited to the relief of misery by the consciousness, that we have the same nature with the sufferer, that we are in danger of the same distresses, and may sometimes implore the same assistance.

Godliness, or piety, is elevation of the mind towards the Supreme Being, and extension of the thoughts of another life. The other life is future, and the Supreme Being is invisible. None would have recourse to an invisible power, but that all other subjects had eluded their hopes. None would fix their attention upon the future, but that they are discontented with the present. If the senses were feasted with perpetual pleasure, they would always keep the mind in subjection. Reason has no authority over us, but by its power to warn us against evil.

In childhood, while our minds are yet unoccupied, religion is impressed upon them, and the first years of almost all, who have been well educated, are passed in a regular discharge of the duties of piety. But, as we advance forward into the crowds of life, innu-

merable delights solicit our inclinations, and innumerable cares distract our attention ; the time of youth is passed in noisy frolics ; manhood is led on from hope to hope, and from project to project ; the dissoluteness of pleasure, the inebriation of success, the ardour of expectation, and the vehemence of competition, chain down the mind alike to the present scene, nor is it remembered how soon this mist of trifles must be scattered, and the bubbles that float upon the rivulet of life be lost for ever in the gulf of eternity. To this consideration, scarce any man is awakened, but by some pressing and resistless evil. The death of those, from whom he derived his pleasures, or to whom he destined his possessions ; some disease, which shews him the vanity of all external acquisitions ; or the gloom of age, which intercepts his prospects of long enjoyment, forces him to fix his hopes upon another state ; and, when he has contended with the tempests of life till his strength fails him, he flies at last to the shelter of religion.

That misery does not make all virtuous, experience too certainly informs us ; but it is no less certain, that, of what virtue there is, misery produces far the greater part. Physical evil may be therefore endured with patience, since it is the cause of moral good ; and patience itself is one virtue, by which we are prepared for that state, in which evil shall be no more.—*Johnson's Idler*, No. 89.

SECTION IV.

A FUTURE LIFE.

THE NATURE OF THE SOUL.—Our inquiries about the nature of the soul, must be bound over at last to

religion, for otherwise they still lie open to many errors. For, since the substance of the soul was not deduced from the mass of heaven and earth, but immediately from God, how can the knowledge of the reasonable soul be derived from philosophy? It must be drawn from the same inspiration, from whence its substance first flowed.—*Lord Bacon's Advancement of Learning*, b. iv. ch. 3.

IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.—The system of this world is doubtless great, compared with the lesser parts of which it is made up, or which it comprehends; but, could such a limited system reflect pleasure and contentment, to a Being possessed of omnipotence, and capable of nothing that is finite or imperfect? Even the mind of man, who is but a step removed from the brute, is not satisfied with this inferior order of sublunar things; he looks up with insatiable desire to the starry firmament, he attempts to sound the extent of boundless space, to see the limit of light, and to read the book, of which he only has made out a sentence; in the midst of animal enjoyment he will abstract himself, that he may seek to know the author of his knowledge, the cause of this his present existence, and the fountain of his future hope. Endless is this book of knowledge, which man has been made to understand; infinite is this field of refined enjoyment, which he has been made to enter; and must he then be made only to know the character, without being suffered to read the work,—only to see the means of fulfilling his desire, without being suffered to quench his thirst, in drinking at this source of intellectual delight? Must he just taste this fruit, delicious in itself, and made for his enjoyment, only to regret his loss,—only to know that his desire shall not be satisfied? Consult the heart, and say if this supposed conduct is reconcile-

able with human equity? But is there any other equity? No justice is equally perfect, whether subordinate or supreme: from the first equation to the last, justice is unchangeable, like truth. The wisdom and power of God are infinite; because, these attributes are unmeasurable. His justice is no less unlimited; but the infinite of equity is surely not to be unequal.—*Hutton's Investigation*, iii. 199.

Had I no other proof of the immateriality of the soul, than the oppression of the just, and the triumph of the wicked in this world, this alone would prevent my having the least doubt of it. So shocking a discord amidst general harmony of things, would make me naturally look out for the cause. I should say to myself, we do not cease to exist with this life; every thing reassumes its order after death. I should, indeed, be embarrassed to tell where man was to be found, when all his perceptible properties were destroyed. At present, however, there appears to me no difficulty in this point, as I acknowledge the existence of two different substances. It is very plain, that, during my corporeal life, as I perceive nothing but by means of my senses, whatever is not submitted to their cognisance must escape me. When the union of the body and the soul is broken, I conceive that the one may be dissolved, and the other preserved entire. Why should the dissolution of the one necessarily bring on that of the other? On the contrary, being so different in their natures, their state of union is a state of violence, and when it is broken they both return to their natural situation: the active and living substance regains all the force it had employed, in giving motion to the passive and dead substance to which it had been united. Alas! my failings make me but too sensible, that man is but half alive in this life, and that the life of the soul commences at the death of the body.—*Rousseau's Emilius*, ii. 158.

But though man is thus employed to alter that distribution of things, which natural events would make, if left to themselves; though, like the gods of the poets, he is perpetually interposing, by extraordinary means, in favour of virtue, and in opposition to vice, and, like them, endeavours to turn away the arrow that is aimed at the head of the righteous, but to accelerate the sword of destruction that is lifted up against the wicked; yet he is by no means able to render the fortune of either quite suitable to his own sentiments and wishes. The natural course of things cannot be entirely controlled by the impotent endeavours of man: the current is rapid, and too strong for him to stop it; and though the rules which direct it, appear to have been established for the wisest and best purposes, they sometimes produce effects, which shock all his natural sentiments. That a great combination of men should prevail over a small one; that those, who engage in an enterprise with forethought and all necessary preparation, should prevail over such as oppose them without any; and that every end should be acquired by those means only, which nature has established for acquiring it, seems to be a rule, not only necessary and unavoidable in itself, but even useful and proper for rousing the industry and attention of mankind. Yet, when, in consequence of this rule, violence and artifice prevail over sincerity and justice, what indignation does it not excite in the breast of every human spectator? What sorrow and compassion for the sufferings of the innocent; and what furious resentment against the success of the oppressor? We are equally grieved and enraged at the wrong that is done, but often find it altogether out of our power to redress it. When we thus despair of finding any force upon earth, which can check the triumph of injustice, we naturally ap-

peal to heaven, and hope, that the great Author of our nature will himself execute hereafter what all the principles, which he has given us for the direction of our conduct, prompt us to attempt even here; that he will complete the plan, which he himself has thus taught us to begin; and will, in a life to come, render to every one according to the works, which he has performed in this world. And thus we are led to the belief of a future state, not only by the weaknesses, by the hopes and fears of human nature, but by the noblest and best principles, which belong to it, by the love of virtue, and by the abhorrence of vice and injustice.—*Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments*, i. 421.

FUTURE REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS.—It is in vain, some will say, to endeavour to prove the existence of a God, as a real support of the laws of morality; all this system will fall to pieces, if we are not informed, at the same time, in what manner this God rewards and punishes. I shall observe, first, that such an objection cannot make a very deep impression, but when it is connected in our minds with some doubt of the existence of a Supreme Being; a question that I shall not yet treat; for, supposing an internal conviction of this last truth; supposing, in all its force, the idea of a God present to our thoughts; I ask, whether, in order to please him, we should have need of knowing precisely the period, when we could perceive distinct signs of his approbation and beneficence? I ask again, whether, to avoid incurring his displeasure, it would be equally necessary for us to know how, and in what manner, he would punish us? Undoubtedly not; for, in taking a comprehensive view of the rewards and punishments, which may proceed from a Supreme Being; struck with his gran-

deur, and astonished by his power, the vague idea of infinity would obtrude; and this idea, so awful, would suffice to govern our sentiments, and fix our principles of conduct. We should be careful not to propose conditions to Him, who has drawn us out of nothing; and we should wait with respect for the moment, when, in his profound wisdom, he may think proper to make us better acquainted with his attributes. Men may say to each other, secure my wages; I want them on such a day, I demand them on such an hour; they barter things of equal value, and during a short space of time; but, in the intercourse of man with the Deity, what a difference! the creature and the Creator,—the child of dust, and the Source of life,—a fleeting moment, and Eternity,—an imperceptible atom, and the infinite Being;—our understanding is struck by the contrast! How then, should we adapt to such disproportion the rules and notions, which we have introduced into our trivial transactions?—*Necker's Religious Opinions*, 241.

FUTURE HAPPINESS OF GOOD MEN.—It is probable, that the future happiness of the good will be of a spiritual nature; but the future misery of the wicked may be both corporeal and mental.

These are points, in which the Scriptures have not been explicit. It is therefore our duty to beware of vain curiosity, and to arm ourselves with a deep humility. We are not judges, what degree of knowledge is most suited to our condition. That there will be a future state at all, has not been discovered, with certainty, to a great part of mankind; and we may observe in general, that God conceals from us all particular things of a distant nature, and only gives us general notices of those that are near; and sometimes not even so much as this, where a peculiar duty, or

design of providence, requires otherwise. However, as we are obliged to read and meditate upon the Scriptures, to examine our own natures, and to compare them with the Scriptures, we seem authorized to make some inquiry into this high and interesting point.

Now, it appears from the foregoing theory, as well as from other methods of reasoning, that the love of God, and of his creatures, is the only point, in which man can rest ; and that the first, being generated by means of the last, does afterwards purify, exalt, and comprehend it. In like manner, the Scriptures place our ultimate happiness in singing praises to God, and the Lamb ; in becoming one with God, and members of Christ, and of each other ; which phrases have a remarkable agreement with the foregoing deductions from reason ; and we seem authorized to conclude from both together, that the future happiness of the blessed will consist in contemplating, adoring, and loving God ; in obeying his commands ; and, by so doing, ministering to the happiness of others ; rejoicing in it, and being partakers of it.

It seems probable, also, both from some passages of the Scriptures, and from the analogy of our natures, that our attachments to dear friends and relations, for whom we are “ not to sorrow as they that “ have no hope,” and our esteem and affection for eminently pious persons in former ages, for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the spirits of other “ just men “ made perfect,” will still subsist on our arrival at the true mount Sion, and the heavenly Jerusalem.—*Hartley's Observations on Man*, ii. 397.

CHAPTER IV.

TESTIMONIES TO THE GENERAL IMPORTANCE OF
RELIGIOUS BELIEF.

or

RELIGION OUR CHIEF BUSINESS.—Man is a religious as well as a social creature, made to know and adore his Creator, to discover and to obey his will. Greater powers of reason, and means of improvement have been measured out to us, than to other animals, that we might be able to fulfil the superior purposes of our destination, whereof religion is the chief.—*Bolingbroke's Works*; v. 470.

From whence it is obvious to conclude, that since our faculties are not fitted to penetrate into the internal fabric and real essences of bodies, but yet plainly discover to us the being of a God, and the knowledge of ourselves, enough to lead us to a full and clear discovery of our duty, and great concernment, it will become us, as rational creatures, to employ those faculties we have about what they are most adapted to, and follow the direction of nature, where it seems to point us out the way. For it is rational to conclude, that our proper employment lies in those inquiries, and in that sort of knowledge which is most suited to our natural capacities, and carries in it our

greatest interest, *i. e.* the condition of our eternal estate. Hence I think I may conclude, that morality is the proper science and business of mankind in general, (who are both concerned and fitted to search out their *summum bonum*,) as several arts, conversant about several parts of nature, are the lot and private talent of particular men, for the common use of human life, and their own particular subsistence in this world.—*Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding*, vol. iii. book iv. chap. 12.

Religion, I said, is either true or false. This is the alternative; there is no medium: if it be the latter, merely an idle system, and a cunningly devised fable, “let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.” The world is before us, let us take all due advantage, and choose what may seem best. For we have no prospect of any life to come, much less any assurances. But, if religion be a truth, it is the most serious truth of any with which we can be engaged; an article of the greatest importance. It demands our most diligent inquiry to obtain a knowledge of it, and a fixed resolution to abide by it when obtained. For religion teaches us that this life bears no proportion to the life to come.—*Bryant on the Authenticity of the Scriptures*.

RELIGION CONNECTED WITH OUR NOBLEST THOUGHTS.—Reflect, then, with attention, on the different consequences which would be the fatal train of the annihilation of religious opinions; it is not a single idea, a single view, that men would lose; it would be, besides, the interest and the charm of all their desires and ambition. There is nothing indifferent, when our actions and designs can be in any respect attached to a Deity; there is nothing indifferent, when the exercise and the improvement of our

faculties appear the commencement of an existence whose termination is unknown: but, when this period offers itself on all sides to our view, when we approach it every moment, what strong illusion would be sufficient to defend us from a sad despondency? Strictly circumscribed in the space of life, its limits should be in such a manner present to our mind, to every sentiment and enterprise perhaps, that we should be tempted to examine what it is which can merit, on our part, an assiduous research; what it is which deserves close and painful application. We deceive ourselves then, I think, when we accuse religion of necessarily rendering the business and the pleasures of the world uninteresting; its chief pleasures, on the contrary, are derived from religion, from those ideas of eternity which it presents to our mind, which serve to sustain the enchantments of hope, and the sense of those duties of which our moral nature is ingeniously composed.

Religious opinions are perfectly adapted to our nature, to our weaknesses and perfections; they come to our succour in our real difficulties, and in those which the abuse of our foresight creates. But in what is grand and elevated in our nature, it sympathizes most: for, if men are animated by noble thoughts; if they respect their intelligence, their chief ornament; if they are interested about the dignity of their nature, they will fly, with transport, to bow before religion, which ennobles their faculties, preserves their strength of mind, and which, through its sentiments, unites them to Him, whose power astonishes their understanding. It is then that, considering themselves as an emanation of the Infinite Being, the commencement of all things, they will not let themselves be drawn aside by a philosophy, whose sad lessons tend to persuade us, that reason, liberty, all this

immaterial essence of ourselves, is the mere result of a fortuitous combination, and an harmony without intelligence.—*Necker's Religious Opinions*, 127.

RELIGION FOUNDED IN THE NATURE OF MAN.— Judging that a knowledge of the symmetry of nature, and the beautiful adjustment of all the operations, would produce a firm belief of a wisdom and power, which is the source of all this fair order, the author and conductor of all, and therefore the natural object of admiration and love. A good heart is open to this impression, and feels no reluctancy, but, on the contrary, a pleasure in thinking man the subject of his government, and the object of his care. This point being once gained, I should think, that the salutary truths of religion will be highly welcome. I should think, that it would be easy to convince such minds, that, in the midst of the immense variety of the works of God, there is one great plan, to which every thing seems to refer, the crowding this world to the utmost degree of possibility with life, with beings that enjoy the things around them, each in its own degree and manner. Among these, man makes a most conspicuous figure, and the maximum of his enjoyments seems a capital article in the ways of Providence. It will, I think, require little trouble to shew, that the natural dictates of religion, or the immediate results of the belief of God's moral government of the universe, coincide, in every circumstance of sentiment, disposition, and conduct, with those that are most productive of enjoyment (on the whole) in social life. The same train of thought will shew, that the real improvements in the pleasures of society, are in fact improvements of man's rational nature; and so many steps towards that perfection, which our own consciences tell us we are capable of, and which religion

encourages us to hope for in another state of being; And thus will the "ways of wisdom appear to be ways of pleasantness, and all her paths to be peace." —*Robison's Proofs of a Conspiracy*, p. 490.

RELIGION A MATTER OF UNIVERSAL CONCERN.—Besides his particular calling for the support of this life, every one has a concern in a future life, which he is bound to look after. This engages his thoughts in religion; and here it mightily lies upon him to understand and reason right. Men, therefore, cannot be excused from understanding the words, and framing the general notions, relating to religion, right. The one day of seven, besides other days of rest, allows, in the Christian world, time enough for this, (had they no other idle hours,) if they would but make use of those vacancies from their daily labour, and apply themselves to an improvement of knowledge, with as much diligence as they often do to a great many other things that are useless, and had but those, that would enter them, according to their several capacities, in a right way, to this knowledge. The original make of their minds is like that of other men; and they would be found not to want understanding fit to receive the knowledge of religion, if they were a little encouraged and helped in it, as they should be. For there are instances of very mean people, who have raised their minds to a great sense and understanding of religion; though these have not been so frequent as could be wished, yet they are enough to clear this condition of life from a necessity of gross ignorance, and to show that more might be brought to be rational creatures and Christians, (for they can hardly be thought really to be so, who, wearing the name, know not so much as the very principles of that religion,) if due care were taken of them. But if it shall

be concluded, that the meaner sort of people must give themselves up to a brutish stupidity in the things of their nearest concernment, which I see no reason for, this excuses not those of a great fortune and education, if they neglect their understandings, and take no care to employ them as they ought, and set them right in the knowledge of those things, for which principally they were given them. At least, those whose plentiful fortunes allow them the opportunities, and helps of improvements, are not so few, but that it might be hoped great advancements might be made in knowledge of all kinds, especially in that of the greatest concern and largest views, if men would make a right use of their faculties, and study their own understandings.—*Locke on the Conduct of the Understanding*, sec. viii.

THE USES OF RELIGION.—True religion is the greatest improvement, advantage, and privilege of human nature; and that which gives it the noblest and highest pre-eminence above other visible creatures.

We may observe in many brute beasts and birds, admirable instincts, dexterities, and sagacities; and in some of them some dark resemblance of reason or ratiocination; but religion is so appropriate to the human nature, that there are scarce any sort of men but have some religion: nor do the most subtle or sagacious brutes afford any signs thereof, as communicated to their natures.

It is one of the chiefest mercies and blessings, that almighty God hath afforded to the children of men, and that which signally manifests his providential care towards and over them, that, in all ages, and among all nations, he hath given unto them some means and helps to discover unto them, though in different degrees, some principal sentiments of true religion. 1. By the

secret characters, impressions and structures thereof in their minds and consciences. 2. By his glorious and admirable works, commonly called the works of nature. 3. By signal providences, and providential regiment of the world. 4. By raising up men, in all ages, of great wisdom, and observation, and learning, which did instruct the more ignorant in this great concernment, the rudiments of natural religion. 5. By traditionary transmission of many important truths and directions of life, from ancestors to their posterity and others; though, in process of time, evil customs and evil men, did, in a great measure, impair and corrupt the sentiments and practices of men, notwithstanding these helps. Therefore the same mercy and goodness of God for the preservation and propagation of the true religion, was pleased to substitute a more fixed and permanent means, namely, the Holy Scriptures or divine revelations, committed to writing in the books of the Old and New Testament. Though the religion delivered in both Testaments be in substance the same, yet the true religion was more fully, plainly, and distinctly delivered by Christ and his Apostles in the New Testament, together also with some additional instructions, for the better preservation and propagation thereof to mankind; and divers additional evidences to prove and manifest the truth of this religion, to procure its belief and acceptation; as the birth, miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, the great reformer of the Jewish, and great institutor of the Christian religion, so called from Christ, that taught and asserted it. The Christian religion is the most perfect rule of our duty to God, ourselves, and others; and was designed principally for these great ends:

1. To restore to the glorious God the honour, duty, and obedience of his creature man; teaching him to

know, to glorify, and to serve his Creator, to be thankful to him, to submit to his will, to obey his law and command, to be thankful for his mercies, to acknowledge him in all his ways, to call upon him, to worship him, to depend upon him, to walk sincerely in his sight, to admire and adore his greatness and goodness in all his works, especially in the great work of the redemption of mankind by his son Jesus Christ.

2. To enable man to attain everlasting happiness, the perpetual vision of the glorious God, and to fit and prepare him to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light and glory.

3. To compose and settle mankind in such a decent and becoming rectitude, order, and deportment in this world, as may be suitable to the existence of a reasonable nature, and the good of mankind, which consists principally in a double relation, (1) to a man's self, sobriety; (2) to others, which consists in those two great habits or dispositions, beneficent to mankind, viz. righteousness or justice, charity or love, and beneficence.—*Sir Matthew Hale's Contemplations*, ii. 321.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHERISHING A SENSE OF RELIGION.—Our time here passes apace. Would it not be prudent, therefore, to have our follies and our weaknesses, if possible, die before us? But the thought of death and eternity, it will be said, disarms pleasure of all its allurements. Be it so. It also disarms pain of all its terrors. Repeat the words—Death and eternity! Pause a while. See how all the glories of the world shrink into nothing! And think you, you shall escape the afflictions of diseases; of a debilitated frame; and, ultimately, of the departing pangs of humanity? The day, be assured, will come, when the further gratification of the corporeal appetites shall

have eternally bade you adieu ; and when, on the bed of sickness, these questions shall work incessantly on your mind—What am I? Whence came I? Who gave me my being? How have I conducted myself since I came into the world? I am now about to leave it; but to what place, into what region, am I to be removed? Where, O! where, am I to make my unalterable, my eternal abode?—*Sullivan's View of Nature*, vi. 367.

VARIETY OF RELIGIOUS OPINIONS A PROOF OF RELIGION.—Similar observations are applicable, and, indeed, in a still more striking degree, to the opinions of mankind on the important questions of religion and morality. The variety of systems, which they have formed to themselves concerning these subjects, has often excited the ridicule of the sceptic and the libertine; but if, on the one hand, this variety shews the folly of bigotry, and the reasonableness of mutual indulgence; the curiosity which has led men in every situation to such speculations, and the influence which their conclusions, however absurd, have had on their character and their happiness, prove, no less clearly, on the other, that there must be some principles from which they all derive their origin, and invite the philosopher to ascertain what are these original and immutable laws of the human mind.

“Examine” (says Mr. Hume) “the religious principles, which have prevailed in the world. You will scarcely be persuaded, that they are any thing but sick men’s dreams; or, perhaps, will regard them more as the playsome whimsies of monkeys in human shape, than the serious, positive, dogmatical asseverations of a being, who dignifies himself with the name of rational.”—“To oppose the torrent of scholastic religion by such feeble maxims as these,

“ that it is impossible for the same thing to be and
 “ not to be ; that the whole is greater than a part ;
 “ that two and three make five ; is pretending to stop
 “ the ocean with a bulrush.” But what is the in-
 ference to which we are led by these observations ?
 Is it, to use the words of this ingenious writer, “ that
 “ the whole is a riddle, an ænigma, an inexplicable
 “ mystery ; and that doubt, uncertainty, and suspense
 “ appear the only result of our most accurate scrutiny
 “ concerning this subject ?” Or should not rather the
 melancholy histories, which he has exhibited of the
 follies and caprices of superstition, direct our atten-
 tion to those sacred and indelible characters on the
 human mind, which all these perversions of reason
 are unable to obliterate ; like that image of himself,
 which Phidias wished to perpetuate, by stamping it
 so deeply on the buckler of his *Minerva* ; “ ut nemo
 “ delere posset aut devellere, qui totam statuam non
 “ imminueret*.” In truth, the more striking the con-
 tradictions, and the more ludicrous the ceremonies, to
 which the pride of human reason has thus been recon-
 ciled, the stronger is our evidence, that religion has
 a foundation in the nature of man. When the great-
 est of modern philosophers declares, that “ he would
 rather believe all the fables in the Legend, and the
 Talmud, and the Alcoran, than that this universal
 frame is without mind † ;” he has expressed the same
 feeling, which, in all ages and nations, has led good
 men, unaccustomed to reasoning, to an implicit faith
 in the creed of their infancy ;—a feeling which af-
 fords an evidence of the existence of the Deity, in-
 comparably more striking, than if, unmixed with error
 and undebased by superstition, this most important of

* Select Discourses, by John Smith, p. 119. Cambridge, 1673.

† Lord Bacon, in his Essays.

all principles had commanded the universal assent of mankind. Where are the other truths, in the whole circle of the sciences, which are so essential to human happiness, as to procure an easy access, not only for themselves, but for whatever opinions may happen to be blended with them? where are the truths so venerable and commanding, as to impart their own sublimity to every trifling memorial, which recalls them to our remembrance; to bestow solemnity and elevation on every mode of expression, by which they are conveyed; and which, in whatever scene they have habitually occupied the thoughts, consecrate every object which it presents to our senses, and the very ground we have been accustomed to tread? To attempt to weaken the authority of such impressions, by a detail of the endless variety of forms, which they derive from casual associations, is surely an employment unsuitable to the dignity of philosophy. To the vulgar, it may be amusing, in this, as in other instances, to indulge their wonder at what is new or uncommon; but to the philosopher it belongs to perceive, under all these various disguises, the workings of the same common nature; and in the superstitions of Egypt, no less than in the lofty visions of Plato, to recognize the existence of those moral ties, which unite the heart of man to the author of his being.—*Stewart's Philosophy of the Human Mind*, ii. 358.

THE ABUSES OF RELIGION NO OBJECTION TO ITS TRUTHS.—Do you think, that by relating the different abuses of authority, we could prove the advantage of anarchy? Could we decry every species of jurisprudence, by recounting all the ills, which have been produced by chicane? Should we be able to throw an odium on the sciences, by recalling all the fatal discoveries, which are owing to our researches? Would

it be proper to stifle every kind of self-love and activity, by reciting the different crimes, which covetousness, pride, and ambition have given rise to? And ought we, then, to desire to annihilate religion, because fanaticism has made an instrument of it to distress the human species? All these questions are similar, and all should be resolved in the same manner: thus we may say with respect to them, that, in all our interests and passions, it is by acquired knowledge, and the light of reason, that right is separated from wrong; but we ought never to confound their proximity with a real identity.

Fanaticism and religion have not any connexion, though very often these ideas are found united. It is not the worship of the common Father of men; it is not the morality of the gospel, whose precepts lead to goodness and forbearance, which inspires the spirit of persecution; we should attribute it to a blind madness, resembling all those vile errors and crimes, which dishonour humanity. But since, at present, the excesses to which men abandon themselves, do not induce us to condemn, as a misfortune, all the sentiments of which the criminal passions are only the extreme, why do we wish to refuse religion the gratitude which is its due, because sometimes it has given birth to hatred and unhappy divisions? It would be necessary rather to remark, that intolerant zeal is, of all the errors of the human mind, that, on which the progress of our knowledge appears to have had most influence. In fact, whilst fanaticism, gradually weakened, seems to be now verging to its decline, the disorders connected with the common passions of ambition, love of wealth, and thirst of pleasure, remain in all their force. However, what sentiment, what predominant idea, has a greater claim to pardon for its mistakes than devotion? By what

an infinite number of benefits the pure spirit of religion makes amends for the abuses, which spring from the false interpretation of its precepts !

It is to this spirit, as we have shown, that men owe the stability of public order and the firm principles of justice : it procures the indigent the succours of charity, and virtue its encouragement ; oppressed innocence its only refuge, and sensibility its dearest hopes. Yes, the pure spirit of religion surrounds us on every side, it makes the charm of solitude, the band of society, the invigorator of intimate affections ; and can we calumniate it and wish to destroy it, on recollecting the tyrannic opinions of some priests and sovereigns, whose principles and conduct we now detest ?

I shall further remark, and ask, why men denounce a sentence of reprobation against religion, and give as the motive, the ancient wars of which it has been the origin, whilst they never contest the importance of commerce, though rivers of blood have been continually shed for the smallest advantage on this account ? Can they be so mistaken in their judgment, as to compare a few pecuniary advantages, which one political state never enjoys, but at the expense of another, with those, as precious as they are universal, of which religion is the origin and support ?—*Necker's Religious Opinions*, 191.

Religion, you say, has produced thousands of crimes ; say rather the superstition, which pervades our wretched globe, and which is the most inveterate enemy of the pure adoration, that we owe to the Supreme Being. Let us detest this monster, which has always preyed upon the vitals of its mother. Those who attack it, are the benefactors of mankind : it is a serpent, which entwines religion : we must crush its

head, without wounding her, whom it infects and devours.

You are apprehensive, lest the adoration of God should soon lead to superstition and fanaticism. But is it not to be feared, that, by denying him, you will open a door to the most baleful passions, and the most atrocious crimes? You affirm, that there is but one step from adoration to superstition. There is an infinite distance for well constituted minds; and such are always the most numerous: they are at the head of nations, they influence public morals.

I will briefly reply to what you say. *If we presume a connexion between man and that incomprehensible Being, we must erect altars to him, and make presents—if we can form no conception of that Being, we must have recourse to priests, &c.* Where is the great harm of assembling in harvest to bless God for the bread, which he has given us? Where is the harm of appointing a citizen to return thanks to the Deity, in the name of the other citizens? The priestly character is a curb, which enforces decorum.

A weak priest inspires contempt, a vicious one excites abhorrence; but a good priest, meek, pious without superstition, charitable, tolerant, is entitled to our love and respect. You are afraid of the abuse, and so am I. Let us therefore join to prevent it; but let us not condemn the use, when it is beneficial to society.—*Voltaire's Quest. Encyclop. as quoted in Chateaubriand's Beauties of Christianity*, iii. 277.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INSTILLING RELIGION INTO THE MINDS OF YOUTH.—Young persons duly initiated in the comforts of religion, hold their Maker to be their firmest friend, and their most powerful protector. They retire to private devotion with the alacrity of one, who goes to visit his bosom friend; and

the hours, that pass in that exercise, are remembered with entire satisfaction. In every difficulty they apply to their Maker; they pray to him in affliction; and in prosperity they pour out their grateful heart to him. Parents, attend, above all other concerns, to the education of your children: riches and honour are as nothing in comparison. It is in your power to stamp on their ductile mind so deep an impression of a benevolent Deity, as to become their ruling principle of action. What praise do you not merit, if successful; what reproach, if negligent? I have a firm conviction, that, if a due impression of the Deity be not sufficient to stem the tide of corruption in an opulent and luxurious nation, it is vain to attempt a remedy.—*Lord Kames on the Culture of the Heart.*

RELIGION RECOMMENDED TO YOUTH.—Preserve your mind, my son, always in a state to wish there should be a God, and you will never doubt of his existence. As for the rest, whatever religion you may embrace, remember that its real duties are independent of human institutions; that an upright heart is the temple of the Divinity; and that, in every country, in every sect, to love God above all things, and thy neighbour as thyself, is the summary of the law. Remember that no religion upon earth can dispense with the obligations of morality; that nothing is truly essential but these, that the heart-felt adoration of the Deity is the first of those obligations, and that without faith there can be no virtue.—*Rousseau's Emilius*, vol. ii. p. 225.

The *summum bonum*, which is only able to make thee happy, as well in thy death as in thy life, I mean the true knowledge and worship of thy Creator and Redeemer; without which, all other things are

vain and miserable.—*Lord Burleigh's Advice to his Son.*

Neither would I have you only fixed and constant in your religion, but also very devout in the practice of it; that, as heretofore, your ancestors have been eminent for honour, you, that come short of them by this *deliquium* or eclipse of it in me, may nevertheless exceed them in the true way to it, by your zeal and piety; and remember this, that he, that is not truly religious, will hardly be esteemed such, since nothing is of less continuance than hypocrisy and dissimulation; and, if your religion be such, such will your greatness and honour be, a feigned thing, and a mere shadow. The observance of religion and the exercise of good manners, do become none so much as illustrious persons. Other glories have lifted them beyond the pitch and reach of men, but this is a ray of the Divinity, which advanceth them near to the Deity, and, like the diamond, outshines the lustre of all other jewels. A religious heart and a clear conscience will make you truly conspicuous: it is as the mother of all other virtues.—*Marquis of Argyle's Instructions to his Son.*

The first thing to be considered is religion. It must be the chief object of your thoughts, since it would be a vain thing to direct your behaviour in the world, and forget that which you owe to him who made it. In the strict sense, it is the only thing necessary. You must take it into your mind, and from thence throw it into your heart, where you are to embrace it so close, as never to lose the possession of it. Religion is exalted reason, refined and sifted from the grosser parts of it. It dwelleth in the upper region of the mind, where there are fewest clouds or mists to darken or offend it. It is both the foundation and the crown of all virtues. It is morality improved and

raised to its height, by being carried nearer heaven, the only place perfection resideth. It cleareth the understanding, and brusheth off the earth that hangeth about our souls.—*Savile, Marquis of Halifax's Advice to his Daughter.*

It was the wisest saying of the wisest man ; “ The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.” Holiness, then, is the introduction of all wisdom ; so it shall be the first of my advice, Fear God ; and if holiness give knowledge, knowledge will give thee happiness, long life, riches, and honour. “ Length of days is in the right hand of Wisdom, and in her left hand are riches and honour,” said the wise king. How exalted a thing, then, is religion, which is the mother of so great blessings ! And who will pity thy complaints for the want of any of these, if they be obtained by the pleasure of that, which will also crown thee with heaven, and holy life ? Be pious, and thou art all these : fear God, and thou shall not fear man or devil, for it will set thee above the reach of fortune or malice.—*William Lord Russel's Advice to his Son.*

I come now to the part of the advice, which I have to offer to you, which most nearly concerns your welfare, and upon which every good and honourable purpose of your life will assuredly turn ; I mean the keeping up in your heart the true sentiments of religion. If you are not right towards God, you can never be so towards men. The noblest sentiment of the human breast is here brought to the test. Is gratitude in the number of a man's virtues ? if it be, the highest benefactor demands the warmest returns of gratitude, love, and praise. *Ingratum qui dixerit, omnia dixit.* If a man wants this virtue, where there are infinite obligations to excite, and quicken it, he will be likely to want all others towards his fellow creatures, whose utmost gifts are poor, compared to

those he daily receives at the hands of his never failing almighty Friend. "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth," is big with the deepest wisdom. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and an upright heart, that is understanding." This is eternally true, whether the wits and rakes of Cambridge allow it or not: nay, I must add of this religious wisdom, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace," whatever your young gentlemen of pleasure think of a whore and a bottle, a tainted health and battered constitution.

Hold fast, therefore, by this sheet-anchor of happiness, religion. You will often want it in the times of most danger; the storms and tempests of life. Cherish true religion as precious, as you will fly with abhorrence and contempt superstition and enthusiasm. The first is the perfection and glory of the human nature; the two last the depravation and disgrace of it. Remember the essence of religion is, a heart void of offence towards God and man; not subtle speculative opinions, but an active vital principle of faith.—*Earl of Chatham's Letters to his Nephew*, p. 25.

PERSONAL TESTIMONIES TO THE WORTH OF RELIGION.—Love my memory; cherish my friends; their faith to me may assure you that they are honest; but, above all, govern your will and affections by the will and word of your Creator, in me beholding the end of this world, with all its vanities.—*Sir Philip Sydney*.

I have hardly had time to sin; but I have set bad examples; perhaps of scandal without knowing it, by neglecting the practices of religion, in which, however, I have always believed, and which I know very well. I have been too thoughtless as a soldier, and lived as a philosopher. I wish to die as a Christian. I

have never been fond of boasters either in war or religion, and perhaps it was from having seen, on the one hand, frivolous impieties, like those of the French, which I have mentioned, and, on the other, Spanish bigotry, that I have always kept myself distant from both. I have often seen death near enough to be familiar with it. But now it is no longer the same thing. I once sought it, now I wait for it; and in waiting I live tranquilly.—I love the eloquence of the pulpit. When Bourdaloue fills me with fear, Massillon fills me with hope, Bossuet astonishes, Fenelon touches me.—*Eugene's Memoirs by Himself, Mudford's Translation, p. 234.*

Religion, my honoured madam, has not only been all my life my chief dependance, but my dearest enjoyment. I have indeed been the luckless victim of wayward follies; but, alas! I have ever been “more fool than knave.” A mathematician without religion is a probable character, an irreligious poet is a monster.

With all my follies of youth, and, I fear, a few vices of manhood, still I congratulate myself as having had in early days, religion strongly impressed on my mind. I have nothing to say to any one, as to which sect he belongs to, or what creed he believes; but I look on the man, who is firmly persuaded of infinite wisdom and goodness superintending and directing every circumstance, that can happen in his lot—I felicitate such a man as having a solid foundation for his mental enjoyment; a firm prop, and sure stay, in the hour of difficulty, trouble, and distress; and a never failing anchor of hope, when he looks beyond the grave.—*Letters of Robert Burns, Nos. 41 and 151.*

For the benefit of all those, whom I may have drawn into sin by my example and encouragement, I leave to the world this my last declaration, which I deliver in the presence of the great God, who knows the secrets

of all hearts, and before whom I am now appearing to be judged: That from the bottom of my soul, I detest and abhor the whole course of my former wicked life: that I think I can never sufficiently admire the goodness of God, who has given me a true sense of my pernicious opinions and vile practices, by which I have hitherto lived without hope, and without God in the world; have been an open enemy to Jesus Christ, doing the utmost despite to the Holy Spirit of grace; and that the greatest testimony of my charity to such, is, to warn them, in the name of God, as they regard the welfare of their immortal souls, no more to deny his being or his providence, or despise his goodness; no more to make a mock of sin; or contemn the pure and excellent religion of my ever blessed Redeemer, through whose merits alone, I, one of the greatest of sinners, do yet hope for mercy and forgiveness. Amen.

Declared and signed in the presence of Ann Rochester, Robert Parsons, June 19, 1680.—

J. ROCHESTER.

Bishop Burnet's Life of the Earl of Rochester.

To Dr. Barlow.—Dear Doctor, I always looked upon you as a man of true virtue; and know you to be a person of sound judgment. For, however I may act in opposition to the principles of religion, or the dictates of reason, I can honestly assure you, I had always the highest veneration for both. The world and I may shake hands, for I dare affirm we are heartily weary of each other. O doctor, what a prodigal have I been of the most valuable of all possessions—time! I have squandered it away with a persuasion it was lasting; and now, when a few days would be worth a hecatomb of worlds, I cannot flatter myself with a prospect of half a dozen hours.

How despicable is that man, who never prays to his God, but in the time of his distress! In what manner can he supplicate that omnipotent being in his affliction with reverence, whom in the tide of his prosperity, he never remembered with dread? Do not brand me with infidelity, when I tell you, I am almost ashamed to offer up my petitions to the throne of grace; or of imploring that divine mercy in the next world, which I have so scandalously abused in this. Shall ingratitude to man be looked upon as the blackest of crimes, and not ingratitude to God? Shall an insult offered to the king be looked on in the most offensive light, and yet no notice taken when the King of kings is treated with indignity and disrespect.

The companions of my former libertinism would scarce believe their eyes, were you to shew them this epistle. They would laugh at me as a dreaming enthusiast, or pity me as a timorous wretch, who was shocked at the appearance of futurity. They are more entitled to my pity than my resentment. A future state may very well strike terror into any man, who has not acted well in this life; and he must have an uncommon share of courage indeed, who does not shrink at the presence of God.

You see, my dear Doctor, the apprehensions of death will soon bring the most profligate to a proper use of their understanding. I am haunted by remorse, despised by my acquaintance, and, I fear, forsaken by my God. There is nothing, my dear Doctor, so dangerous as extraordinary abilities. I cannot be accused of vanity now, by being sensible that I was once possessed of uncommon qualifications, as I sincerely regret, that I was ever blessed with any at all. My rank in life still made these accomplishments more conspicuous; and, fascinated with the

general applause which they procured, I never considered about the proper means, by which they should be displayed. Hence, to purchase a smile from a blockhead, whom I despised, I have frequently treated the virtuous with disrespect, and sported with the holy name of heaven, to claim a laugh from a parcel of fools, who were entitled to nothing but my contempt.

Your men of wit, my dear Doctor, look upon themselves as discharged from the duties of religion ; and confine the doctrines of the gospel to people of meaner understandings ; and look on that man to be of a narrow genius, who studies to be good. What a pity, that the holy writings are not made the criterion of true judgment ! Favour me, my dear Doctor, with a visit as soon as possible. Writing to you gives me some ease. I am of opinion, this is the last visit I shall ever solicit from you. My distemper is powerful. Come and pray for the departing spirit of the unhappy——BUCKINGHAM*.

* George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, born in 1627, was a distinguished person in the reign of Charles II. He possessed great talents, which had been highly improved by education ; and had a peculiar faculty of turning serious things into ridicule. His uncommon vivacity of wit made his company be greatly courted in the gay world ; but he is represented as having been destitute of every principle of friendship, virtue, or religion.

CHAPTER V.

TESTIMONIES TO THE PARTICULAR USES OF RELIGION.

SECTION I.

AS A BOND OF SOCIETY.

THOSE princes and republics, who wish to maintain themselves free from all corruption, ought, above all things, to preserve religion in its purity, and respect the sanctity of its ceremonies; for there is not so sure a sign of the ruin of a state, as the contempt of divine worship.—*Machiavel's Prince, Introd. xvii. Byerley's Translation.*

In fact, men do not reason after that manner, and they draw many consequences from the belief of a divine existence, and suppose that the Deity will inflict punishments on vice, and bestow rewards on virtue, beyond what appears in the ordinary course of nature. Whether this reasoning of theirs be just or not, is no matter; its influence on their life and conduct must still be the same. And those, who attempt to disabuse them of such prejudices, may, for aught I know, be good reasoners, but I cannot allow them to be good citizens and politicians: since they

free men from one restraint upon their passions; and make the infringement of the laws of equity and society in one respect more easy and secure.—*Hume's Philosophical Essays*, p. 231, as quoted by Leland.

Mr. Bayle has pretended to prove, that it is better to be an Atheist, than an idolater; that is, in other words, that it is less dangerous to have no religion at all, than a bad one. "I had rather," said he, "it should be said of me, that I had no existence, than that I am a villain." This is only a sophism, founded on this, that it is of no importance to the human race to believe, that a certain man exists; whereas it is extremely useful for them to believe the existence of a God. From the idea of his non-existence, immediately follows that of our independence; or, if we cannot conceive this idea, that of disobedience. To say, that religion is not a restraining motive, because it does not always restrain, is equally absurd as to say, that the civil laws are not a restraining motive. It is a false way of reasoning against religion, to collect in a large work a long detail of the evils it has produced; if we do not give at the same time an enumeration of the advantages, which have flowed from it. Were I to relate all the evils that have arisen in the world from civil laws, from monarchy, and from republican government, I might tell of frightful things. Was it of no advantage for subjects to have religion, it would still be of some if princes had it, and if they whitened with foam the only rein which can restrain those who fear not human laws. A prince, who loves and fears religion, is a lion, who stoops to the hand that strokes, or to the voice that appeases him. He, who fears and hates religion, is like the savage beast that growls and bites the chain that prevents his flying on the passenger. He, who has no religion at all, is that terrible animal, who per-

ceives his liberty only, when he tears in pieces, and when he devours. The question is not to know, whether it would be better that a certain man or a certain people had no religion, than to abuse what they have; but to know which is the least evil, that religion be sometimes abused, or that there be no such restraint as religion on mankind.—*Montesquieu's * Spirit of Laws*, book xxiv. chap. 2.

Hence, every effort of governing wisdom, ought to be exerted in order to preserve the morals of a people; for, these being lost, the very source of government is corrupted; and, to suppose that a corrupted government should correct itself, or make immoral people virtuous, would be no less erroneous than to suppose, that water, when at liberty, should not flow in descending to the lowest place.—*Hutton's Investigation*, iii. 530.

We know, and, what is better, we feel inwardly, that religion is the basis of civil society, and the source of all good and of all comfort. We know, and it is our pride to know, that man is, by his constitution, a religious animal; that Atheism is against not only our reason, but our instincts, and that it cannot prevail long. But if, in the moment of rest, and in

* “What his real sentiments with regard to religion were, (says the Earl of Charlemont of Baron Montesquieu,) I cannot exactly say. He certainly was not a papist; but I have no reason to believe that he was not a Christian. In all our conversations, which were perfectly free, I never heard him utter the slightest hint, the least word, which savoured of profaneness; but, on the contrary, whenever it came in his way to mention Christianity, he always spoke of its doctrines and its precepts with the utmost respect and reverence; so that, did I not know, that he had too much wisdom and goodness to wish to deprecate the ruling religion, from his general manner of expressing himself, I should make no scruple freely to declare him a perfect Christian.”—*Hardy's Life of the Earl of Charlemont*, i. 71.

a drunken delirium, from the hot spirit drawn out of the alembick of hell, (which in France is now so furiously boiling,) we should uncover our nakedness by throwing off that Christian religion, which has hitherto been our boast and comfort, and one great source of civilization among us, and among many other nations ; we are apprehensive (being well aware that the mind will not endure a veil) that some uncouth, pernicious, and degrading superstition, might take place of it.—*Burke's Works*, v. iii. p. 128.

It is then, if I may be permitted so to express myself, because the laws find men in a healthy state, prepared by religious instruction, that they can restrain them ; but, if a system of education, merely political, was ever to prevail, new precautions and new chains would become absolutely necessary ; and, after having freed us from the mild ties of religion, the projectors of such a system would increase our civil slavery, would bend our necks under the hardest of all yokes, that which is imposed by our fellow creatures. Religion, whose influence they wish us to reject, is better appropriated than they think, to the mixture of pride and weakness, which constitutes our nature ; and for us, such as we are, its action is far preferable to that of the penal laws. It is not, before his equals, armed with the rod of vengeance, that the culprit is made to appear ; it is not to their ignorance, or to their inexorable justice, that he is abandoned ; it is at the tribunal of his own conscience, that religion informs against him ; before a God, sovereign of the world, that it humbles, and in the name of a tender and merciful Father that it comforts him. Alas ! while you at once take from us both our consolation and our true dignity, you wish to refer every thing to private interest and public punishment ; but permit me to listen to those commands, which come from on

high ; leave me to divert my attention from the menacing sceptre, which the potentates of the earth wield in their hand ; leave me to account with Him, before whom they shrink into nothing ; leave me, in short, to address myself to him, who pardons, and who, at the moment I have offended, permits me still to love him, and rely on his grace. Alas ! without the idea of a God, without this connexion with a Supreme Being, author of all nature, we should only listen to the vile counsels of selfish prudence, we should only have to flatter or adore the rulers of nations, and all those who, in an absolute monarchy, are the numerous representatives of the authority of the prince ; yes, talents, sentiments, ought to bend before these distributors of so much good and evil, if nothing exists beyond worldly interest : and when once every one cringes, there is no more dignity in the character, men become incapable of any great action, and unequal to any moral excellence.—*Necker's Religious Opinions*, p. 65.

Piety and religion have an essential influence on the happiness of nations. Nothing is so proper as piety to strengthen virtue, and give it its due extent. By the word piety, I mean a disposition of soul, that leads us to direct all our actions towards Deity, and to endeavour to please him in every thing we do. To the practice of this virtue all mankind are indispensably obliged : it is the purest source of their felicity : and those, who unite in civil society, are under still greater obligations to practise it. A nation ought then to be pious. The superiors, entrusted with the public affairs, should constantly endeavour to deserve the approbation of their divine Master ; and whatever they do, in the name of the state, ought to be regulated by this grand view. The care of forming pious dispositions in all the people should be constant-

ly one of the principal objects of their vigilance, and from this the state will derive very great advantages. A serious attention to merit, in all our actions, the approbation of an infinitely wise being, cannot fail of producing excellent citizens. Enlightened piety in the people is the support of a lawful authority ; and in the sovereign's heart it is the pledge of the people's safety, and excites their confidence. Ye lords of the earth, who acknowledge no superior here below, what security can we have for the purity of your intentions, if we do not conceive you to be deeply impressed with respect for the common Father and Lord of men, and animated with a desire to please him?—*Vattel's Law of Nations*, b. i. ch. xii.

Were there but one man upon earth, he would not, it is allowed, stand in need of any prescribed form of worship. His would be an inward devotion. But, as a social animal, the surest bond to hold the different members of society to their respective duties, is the sacred bond of religion. Even the heathens found government and society could not subsist without it. Plutarch styles it, “the cement of all community, and the chief basis of all legislative power.” Had it not been for this, together with our natural impressions concerning justice and probity ; instead of those well ordered governments and cities, which are now in the world, mankind must have lived either wild and solitary in caves, or else in troops of robbers, subsisting upon the spoil and rapine of such as were weaker than themselves. “*Pietate sublatâ, fides etiam, et societas humani generis, et unâ excellentissima virtus justitia tollitur* *.” And hence, in addition to such unavoidable eradication of good faith and justice, the civil law made the abuse of religion a common injury. “*Religio contaminata ad omnium pertinet injuriam.*”—*Sullivan's View of Nature*, vol. vi. 189.

* Cicero.

This excellent purpose may be greatly forwarded by a national establishment * for moral instruction and admonition ; and if the public instruction should add all the motives to virtuous moderation, which are suggested by the consideration of genuine religion, every advice would have a tenfold influence. Religion and moral instructions are, therefore, in their own nature, unequivocal supports to that moderate exertion of the authority arising from civil subordination, which the most refined philanthropist, or cosmopolite, acknowledges to be necessary for the very existence of a great and cultivated society. I have never seen a scheme of Utopian happiness, that did not contain some system of education ; and I cannot conceive any system of education, of which moral instruction is not a principal part. Such establishments are dictates of nature, and obtrude themselves on the mind of every person, who begins to form plans of civil union. And, in all existing societies, they have indeed been formed, and are considered as the greatest corrector and soother of those discontents, that are unavoidable in the minds of the unsuccessful and the unfortunate. The magistrate, therefore, whose professional habits lead him frequently to exert himself for the maintainance of public peace, cannot but see the advantages of such stated remembrancers of our duty. He will therefore support and cherish this public establishment, which so evidently assists him in his beneficent and important labours.—*Robison's Proofs of a Conspiracy*, p. 56.

Infidelity must dispose men to shake off the yoke of authority, to unbounded licentiousness ; and, re-

* This passage is cited as expressing this author's conviction of the importance of religious instruction in a state, and not as an argument for a national establishment, in any peculiar sense.

ciprocally, is itself the natural consequence of every degree of licentiousness. Those, who do not regard the supreme authority, can be little expected to regard any of his vicegerents: those who do not fear God, will not honour the king. If the infatuation of princes was not of the deepest kind, they could not but see, that they hold their dominions entirely by the real Christianity, that is left amongst us; and that, if they do succeed in taking away this foundation, or weakening it much farther, their governments must fall, like houses built upon sand. Besides the great influence which Christianity has, to make men humble and obedient, it is to be considered, that our ancestors have so interwoven it with the constitutions of the kingdoms of Europe, that they must stand or fall together. Christianity is the cement of the buildings. *Hartley's Observations on Man*, ii. p. 146.

SECTION II.

AS A RULE OF CONDUCT.

IT is no doubt a great encouragement to virtue, that glory is its promised recompense. It is doubtless a high consolation, and a solid support, firmly to believe that all our actions are witnessed by an incorruptible and supreme Judge, infallible, and sovereignly good, at whose tribunal all human acts of injustice will be repaid, and good actions meet with a certain recompense. Theism, therefore, is the most sublime, the most useful, the most affecting speculation, to which philosophy has ever raised the mind.—*Mirabeau's Inquiry Concerning Lettres de Cachet*, i. 54.

If there be a belief or conception of a Deity, who is considered as worthy and good, admired and revered as such, being understood to have, besides mere power and knowledge, the highest excellence of nature, such as render him justly amiable to all; and if, in the manner this sovereign and mighty being is represented, or as he is historically described, there appears in him a high or eminent regard to what is good and excellent, a concern for the good of all, and an affection of benevolence and love towards the whole: such an example must undoubtedly serve, (as above explained,) to raise and increase the affection towards virtue, and help to submit and subdue all the other affections to that alone. Nor is this good effected by example merely; for where the theistical belief is perfect, there must be a steady opinion of the superintendency of a Supreme Being, a witness and spectator of human life, and conscious of whatsoever is felt or acted in the universe: so that, in the perfectest recess or deepest solitude, there must be one still presumed remaining with us, whose presence singly must be of more moment, than that of the most august assembly on earth. In such a presence it is evident, that, as the shame of guilty actions must be the greatest of any; so must the honour be of well-doing, even under the unjust censure of a world. And in this case, it is very apparent how conducive a perfect theism must be to virtue, and how great deficiency there is in atheism.—*Shaftesbury's Characteristics*, ii. 56.

That virtue is her own reward, is but a cold principle, and not able to maintain our variable resolutions in a constant and settled way of goodness. I have practised that honest artifice of Seneca; and, in my retired and solitary imaginations, to detain me from the foulness of vice, have fancied to myself the

presence of my dear and worthiest friends, before whom I should lose my head rather than be vicious ; yet, herein I found that there was nothing but moral honesty ; and this was not to be virtuous for his sake, who must reward us all at the last. I have tried if I could reach that great resolution of his to be honest, without a thought of heaven or hell ; and indeed I found, upon a natural inclination and inbred loyalty unto virtue that I could serve her without a livery, yet not in that resolved and venerable way, but that the frailty of my nature, upon easy temptation, might be induced to forget her. The life, therefore, and spirit of all our actions is the resurrection, and a stable apprehension that our ashes shall enjoy the fruit of our pious endeavours.—*Brown's Religio Medici.*

I have read your manuscript with some attention. By the argument it contains against a particular providence, though you allow a general providence, you strike at the foundations of all religion. For, without the belief of a Providence, that takes cognizance of, guards and guides, and may favour particular persons, there is no motive to worship a Deity, to fear its displeasure, or to pray for its protection. I will not enter into any discussion of your principles, though you seem to desire it. At present I shall only give you my opinion, that, though your reasonings are subtle, and may prevail with some readers, you will not succeed so as to change the general sentiments of mankind on that subject, and the consequence of printing this piece will be, a great deal of odium drawn upon yourself, mischief to you, and no benefit to others. He that spits against the wind, spits in his own face. But were you to succeed, do you imagine any good would be done by it? You yourself may find it easy to live a virtuous life, without the assist-

ance afforded by religion; you having a clear perception of the advantages of virtue, and the disadvantages of vice, and possessing a strength of resolution sufficient to enable you to resist common temptations. But think how great a portion of mankind consists of weak and ignorant men and women, and of inexperienced inconsiderate youth of both sexes, who have need of the motives of religion to restrain them from vice, to support their virtue, and retain them in the practice of it till it becomes *habitual*, which is the great point for its security. And perhaps you are indebted to her originally, that is to your religious education, for the habits of virtue, upon which you now justly value yourself. You might easily display your excellent talents of reasoning upon a less hazardous subject, and thereby obtain a rank with our most distinguished authors. For among us it is not necessary, as among the Hottentots, that a youth, to be raised into the company of men, should prove his manhood by beating his mother. I would advise, you, therefore, not to attempt unchaining the tiger, but burn this piece before it is seen by any other person, whereby you will save yourself a great deal of mortification from the enemies it may raise against you, and perhaps a good deal of regret and repentance. If men are so wicked with *religion*, what would they be if without it?—*Franklin's Correspondence*, i. 279.

Merely because it is his duty, a good man will sometimes do good: he will relieve distress, when perhaps his compassion is not very strong; he may be regular in his religious performances, when his devotion is not so fervent as it ought to be. Nothing surely is more laudable, than to do what we know to be our duty. But, if we can, at the same time, call up the correspondent good affection, the devotion, for example, or the compassion; we shall, by so doing,

both improve our moral nature, and give double force to the virtuous motive. Yet, let not a man be discouraged, if, on some occasions, the good affection is not so lively as he wishes it to be; let him do the good action notwithstanding, if conscience commands it: for whatever is thus done is virtue; and frequent repetitions of the action, from this principle, will in time produce, or strengthen the good affection which he is anxious to cultivate. In like manner, when we act in compliance with a good affection; when we relieve distress, because pity impels us; requite a favour when prompted by gratitude; do good to another from a desire of seeing him happy; still let the performance be enforced by this consideration, that such is our duty. But even this is not all. To constitute true Christian virtue, good affections, disposing to good actions, and accompanied too with a sense of duty, are not sufficient without the aid of another principle, and that is piety. The love of God ought continually to predominate in the mind, and give to every act of duty grace and animation. Christians do what is right not only because good affections prompt them to it, and because their conscience declares it to be incumbent; but also because they consider it as agreeable to the will of God, to please whom is ever their supreme desire.—*Beattie's Elements of Moral Science*, ii. 120.

SECTION III.

AS A SOURCE OF CONSOLATION.

WERE we totally ignorant of a Deity, this world would appear to us a mere chaos. Under the government of a wise and benevolent Deity, chance is excluded; and every event appears to be the result of established laws: good men submit to whatever happens, without repining; knowing that every event is ordered by divine providence: they submit with entire resignation, and such resignation is a sovereign balsam for every misfortune.—*Lord Kames' Sketches of the History of Man*, iv. 203.

And now, last of all, there remains for us to consider a yet further advantage to virtue, in the theistical belief above the atheistical. The proposition may at first sight appear over-refined, or of a sort which is esteemed too nicely philosophical. But, after what has been already examined, the subject perhaps may be more easily explained. There is no creature, according to what has been already proved, who must not of necessity be *ill* in some degree, by having an affection or aversion in a stronger degree than is suitable to his own private good, or that of the system to which it is joined. For, in either case, the affection is *ill* and vicious. Now, if a rational creature has that degree of aversion, which is requisite to arm him against any particular misfortune, and alarm him against the approach of any calamity; this is regular and well. But if, after the misfortune has happened, his aversion continues still, and his passion rather grows upon him; whilst he rages at the accident, and exclaims against his private fortune or lot; this

will be acknowledged both vicious *in present* and *for the future*; as it affects the temper, and disturbs that easy course of the affections, on which virtue and goodness so much depend. On the other side, the patient enduring of the calamity, and the bearing up of the mind under it, must be acknowledged *immediately* virtuous and *preservative of virtue*. Now, according to the hypothesis of those who exclude a general mind, it must be confessed there can nothing happen in the course of things to deserve either our admiration and love, or our anger and abhorrence. However, as there can be no satisfaction, at the best; in thinking upon what *atoms* and *chance* produce; so, upon disastrous occasions, and under the circumstances of a calamitous and hard fortune, 'tis scarcely possible to prevent a natural kind of abhorrence and spleen, which will be entertained and kept alive by the imagination of so perverse an order of things. But in another hypothesis (that of perfect *theism*) it is understood, "*That whatever the order of the world produces is in the main both just and good.*" Therefore, in the course of things in this world, whatever hardship of events may seem to force from any rational creature a hard censure of his private condition or lot; he may, by reflection, nevertheless come to have patience, and to acquiesce in it. Nor is this all. He may go farther still in this reconciliation; and, from the same principle, may make the *lot* itself an object of his good affection; whilst he strives to maintain this generous fealty, and stands so well disposed towards the laws and government of his higher country.

Such an affection must needs create the highest constancy in any state of sufferance, and make us in the best manner support whatever hardships are to be endured for virtue's sake. And, as this affection must of necessity cause a greater acquiescence and

complacency with respect to ill accidents, ill men, and injuries ; so, of course, it cannot fail of producing still a greater equality, gentleness, and benignity in the temper. Consequently the affection must be a truly good one, and a creature the more truly good and virtuous by possessing it. For whatsoever is the occasion or means of more affectionately uniting a rational creature to his PART in society, and causes him to prosecute the public good, or interest of his species with more zeal and affection than ordinary ; is undoubtedly the cause of more than ordinary virtue in such a person.

Hence we may determine justly the relation which VIRTUE has to PIETY ; the *first* being not complete but in the *latter* ; since where the latter is wanting there can neither be the same benignity, firmness, nor constancy ; the same good composure of the affections or uniformity of mind. And thus the perfection and height of VIRTUE must be owing to *the belief of a God*.—*Shaftesbury's Characteristics*, ii. 72. 1714.

This univereal benevolence, how noble and generous soever, can be the source of no solid happiness to any man, who is not thoroughly convinced, that all the inhabitants of the universe, the meanest as well as the greatest, are under the immediate care and protection of that great, benevolent, and all-wise being, who directs all the movements of nature, and who is determined by his own unalterable perfections, to maintain in it, at all times, the greatest possible quantity of happiness. To this universal benevolence, on the contrary, the very suspicion of a fatherless world must be the most melancholy of all reflections ; from the thought, that all the unknown regions of infinite and incomprehensible space may be filled with nothing but endless misery and wretchedness. All the splendour of the highest prosperity can never en-

lighten the gloom, with which so dreadful an idea must necessarily overwhelm the imagination; nor, in a wise and virtuous man, can all the sorrow of the most affecting adversity ever dry up the joy, which necessarily springs from the habitual and thorough conviction of the truth of the contrary system.—*Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ii. 114.

Those, who seem to have a more pressing and constant need of the assistance of religion, have been left by the misfortunes of their parents to the wide world, devoid of property, and deprived also of those resources which depend on education. This class of men, condemned to hard labour, are, as it were, confined in a rough and uniformly barren path, where every day resembles the last, where they have not any confused expectations, or flattering illusion to divert them; they know that there is a wall of separation between them and fortune; and, if they carried their views in life forward, they would only discover the dreadful state any infirmity would reduce them to; and the deplorable situation to which they might be exposed, by the cruel neglect which attends old age. With what transport, in this situation, would they not catch at the comfortable hopes, which religion presents! With what satisfaction would they not learn, that after this probationary state, where so much disproportion overwhelmed them, there would come a time of equality! What would be their complaints, if they were to renounce a sentiment which still conforms itself, for their advantage, to a general idea, the only one in short, of which they can make use in all events and circumstances of life. It is God's will, they say to themselves, and this first thought supports their resignation; God will recompense you, God will return it to you, say they to others, when they receive alms;

and these words remind them, that the God of the rich and powerful is also theirs; and that, far from being indifferent to their fate, He deigns Himself to discharge their obligations.—*Necker's Religious Opinions*, p. 133.

To persons in such unfortunate circumstances, (that is, innocent persons condemned by the world as guilty,) that humble philosophy, which confines its views to this life, can afford, perhaps, but little consolation. Every thing, that could render either life or death respectable, is taken from them. They are condemned to death, and to everlasting infamy. Religion can alone afford them any effectual comfort. She alone can tell them, that it is of little importance what man may think of their conduct, while the all-seeing Judge of the world approves of it. She alone can present to them the views of another world; a world of more candour, humanity and justice than the present; where their innocence is in due time to be declared, and their virtue to be personally rewarded; and the same great principle, which can strike terror into triumphant vice, affords the only effectual consolation to disgraced and insulted innocence.—*Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments*, vol. i. p. 303.

These are the occasions, which force the mind to take refuge in religion. When we have no help in ourselves, what can remain, but that we look up to a higher and greater power? And to what hope may we not raise our eyes and hearts, when we consider that the greatest power is the best? Surely there is no man, who, thus afflicted, does not seek succour in the gospel, which has brought life and immortality to light. The precepts of Epicurus, who teaches us to endure what the laws of the universe make necessary, may silence but not content us. The dictates of Zeno, who commands us to look with indifference

on external things, may dispose us to conceal our sorrow, but cannot assuage it. Real alleviation in the loss of a friend; and rational tranquillity in the prospect of our own dissolution, can be received only from the promises of him, in whose hands are life and death; and from the assurance of another and better state, in which all tears will be wiped away from the eyes, and the whole soul shall be filled with joy. Philosophy may infuse stubbornness, but religion only can give patience.—*Johnson's Idler*, No. 41.

It is this way of thinking, it is these melancholy truths, that make religion so precious to the poor miserable children of men. If it is a mere phantom, existing only in the heated imagination of enthusiasm,

“What truth on earth so precious as the lie!”

My idle reasonings sometimes make me a little sceptical, but the necessities of my heart always give the cold philosophizings the lie. Who looks for the heart weaned from earth; the soul affianced to her God; the correspondence fixed with heaven; the pious supplication and devout thanksgiving, constant as the vicissitude of even and morn; who thinks to meet with these in the court, the palace, in the glare of public life? No, to find them in their precious importance and divine efficacy, we must search among the obscure recesses of disappointment, affliction, poverty, and distress.—*Letters of Robert Burns*, No. 54.

Whatever be our doubts, fears, or anxieties, whether selfish or social, whether for time or eternity, our only hope and refuge must be in the infinite power, knowledge, and goodness of God. And, if these be really our hope and refuge; if we have a true practical sense and conviction of God's infinite ability and readiness to protect and bless us; an entire, peaceful, happy resignation will be the result, not-

withstanding the clouds and perplexities wherewith we may sometimes be encompassed. He, who has brought us into this state, will conduct us through it: he knows all our wants and distresses: his infinite nature will bear down all opposition from our impotence, ignorance, vice, or misery: he is our creator, judge, and king, our friend, and father, and God.

And though the transcendent greatness and gloriousness of this prospect may, at first view, make our faith stagger, and incline us to disbelieve through joy: yet upon farther consideration, it seems rather to confirm and establish itself on that account; for, the more it exceeds our gratitude and comprehension, the more does it coincide with the idea of that absolutely perfect being, whom the several orders of imperfect beings perpetually suggest to us, as our only resting place, the cause of causes, and the supreme reality.

However, on the other hand, it must be acknowledged, that the evils, which we see and feel, are strong arguments of the possibility of still greater evils, of any finite evils whatever, and of their consistency with the divine attributes. All finites are equally nothing in respect of infinite; and if the infinite power, knowledge, and goodness of God can permit the least evil, they may permit any finite degree of it how great soever, for any thing that we know to the contrary. And this most alarming consideration cannot but compel every thinking person to use his utmost endeavours, first for his own preservation and deliverance; and then, in proportion to his benevolence, for the preservation and deliverance of others.

Nor can such a person long hesitate what method to take in the general. The duties of piety, benevolence, and self government, considered in the general,

have had such a stamp set upon them by all ages and nations, by all orders and conditions of men; approve themselves so much to our frame and constitution; and are so evidently conducive to both public and private happiness here; that one cannot doubt of their procuring for us not only security, but our *summum bonum*, our greatest possible happiness, during the whole course of our existence, whatever that be.

These are the genuine dictates of what is called natural religion. But we, who live in Christian countries, may have recourse to far clearer light, and to a more definite rule: the Christian revelation is attested by such evidences, historical, prophetic, and moral, as will give abundant comfort and satisfaction to all who seek them earnestly. A future life, with indefinite, or even infinite, rewards and punishments, is set before us in express terms, the conditions declared, examples related both to encourage our hopes and alarm our fears, and assurances of assistance and mercy delivered in the strongest and most pathetic terms.—*Hartley's Observations on Man*, ii. 7.

CHAPTER VI.

TESTIMONIES TO THE CONNEXION OF RELIGIOUS
SENTIMENTS AND VIRTUOUS CONDUCT WITH
HAPPINESS.

SECTION I.

HAPPINESS NOT IN THINGS EXTERNAL.

HAPPINESS NOT IN RICHES.—I cannot call riches better than the baggage of virtue; the Roman word is better, "*impedimenta*:" for, as the baggage is to an army, so is riches to virtue. It cannot be spared, nor left behind; but it hindereth the march, yea, and the care of it sometimes loseth, or disturbeth the victory. Of great riches there is no real use, except it be in the distribution; the rest is but conceit: so saith Solomon, "Where much is, there are many to consume it; and what hath the owner, but the sight of it with his eyes?" The personal fruition in any man cannot reach to feel great riches: there is a custody of them, or a power of dole and donative of them, or a fame of them, but no solid use to the owner. Do you not see what feigned prices are set upon little stones and rarities? and what works of ostentation are undertaken, because there

might seem to be some use of great riches? But then you will say they may be of use to bring men out of dangers or troubles; as Solomon saith, "Riches are as a strong hold in the imagination of the rich man." But this is excellently expressed, that it is in imagination, and not always in fact: for certainly great riches have sold more men, than they have bought out. Seek not proud riches, but such as thou mayest get justly, use soberly, distribute cheerfully, and leave contentedly: yet have no abstract nor frierly contempt of them; but distinguish, as Cicero saith well of Rabirius Posthumus; *In studio rei amplificandæ apparebat, non avaritiæ prædam, sed instrumentum bonitatis, quæri.* Hearken also to Solomon, and beware of hasty gathering of riches, *Qui festinat ad divitias non erit insons.*—*Bacon's Essays*, No. 34.

HAPPINESS NOT IN MIRTH.—We are too apt to judge of happiness by appearances; we suppose it to be where it very rarely exists; we seek it where it cannot be found. Mirth is a very equivocal sign of happiness. A merry fellow is often in reality an unhappy mortal, who, by laughing, endeavours to conceal and to forget his misery. Those gentlemen, who, in a polite circle, appear so good humoured, so open, so serene, are generally morose and peevish at home; their domestics feel the want of that good nature, which they lavish upon their companions. True contentment is never extremely gay or noisy; its possessor, ever careful of so pleasing a sensation, will not suffer it to evaporate, but enjoys the invaluable blessing with deliberate taste and reflection. The man, who is really happy, speaks little, and seldom laughs: he, as it were, contracts the circle of felicity round his heart. Solitude and silence are friends to true pleasure. Tender emotions and tears are the com-

panions of enjoyment, and even excessive joy more frequently produces tears than laughter*.—*Rousseau's Emilius*, ii. 43.

HAPPINESS NOT IN WORLDLY HONOURS AND ENJOYMENTS.—I have run the silly rounds of business and pleasure, and I have done with them all. I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world; and consequently know their futility, and do not regret their loss. I appraise them at their real value, which is, in truth, very low; whereas those who have not experienced, always overrate them. They only see their gay outside, and are dazzled with their glare. But I have been behind the scenes; I have seen all the coarse pullies, and dirty ropes, which exhibit and move the gaudy machine. I have seen and smelt the tallow candles, which illuminate the whole decoration, to the astonishment and admiration of an ignorant multitude. When I reflect back upon what I have seen, and what I have heard, and what I have done, I can hardly persuade myself, that all that frivolous hurry, and bustle, and pleasure of the world had any reality; but I look upon all that has passed as one of those romantic dreams, which opium commonly occasions; and I do by no means desire to repeat the nauseous dose, for the sake of the fugitive dream.—*Chesterfield's Letters*.

HAPPINESS NOT IN VICIOUS PLEASURES.—The character, which most young men first aim at, is that of a man of pleasure; but they generally take it upon trust; and, instead of consulting their own taste and inclinations, they blindly adopt whatever those, with

* These admissions may be alleged in reply to the charge often brought against seriousness in religion, as tending to impart a gloomy habit to the mind.

whom they chiefly converse, are pleased to call by the name of pleasure ; and a *man of pleasure*, in the vulgar acceptation of that phrase, means only a beastly drunkard, an abandoned whoremaster, and a profligate swearer and curser. As it may be of use to you, I am not unwilling, though at the same time ashamed to own, that the vices of my youth proceeded much more from my silly resolution of being what I heard called a man of pleasure, than from my own inclinations. I always naturally hated drinking ; and yet I have often drunk, with disgust at the time, attended by great sickness the next day, only because I then considered drinking as a necessary qualification for a fine gentleman, and a man of pleasure. The same as to gaming. I did not want money, and consequently had no occasion to play for it ; but I thought play another necessary ingredient in the composition of a man of pleasure, and accordingly I plunged into it without desire at first ; sacrificed a thousand real pleasures to it ; and made myself solidly uneasy by it, for thirty, the best years of my life. I was even absurd enough, for a little while, to swear, by way of adorning and completing the shining character which I affected ; but this folly I soon laid aside, upon finding both the guilt and the indecency of it. Thus seduced by fashion, and blindly adopting nominal pleasures, I lost real ones ; and my fortune impaired, and my constitution shattered, are, I must confess, the just punishment of my errors. I have not mentioned the pleasures of the mind (which are the solid and permanent ones) because they do not come under the head of what people commonly call pleasures ; which they seem to confine to the senses. The pleasure of virtue, of charity, and of learning, is true and lasting

pleasure, which I hope you will be well and long acquainted with.—*Chesterfield's Letters to his Son*, vol. i. p. 203.

HAPPINESS NOT IN ANY CREATED THING.—So that these diversions of men, which are found to constitute their happiness, are not only mean and vile, but they are false and deceitful: that is, we are in love with mere airy shapes and phantoms, such as must be incapable of possessing the heart of man, had he not lost the taste and perception of real good, and were he not filled with baseness, and levity, and pride, together with an infinite number of other vices, such as can no way relieve us under our present miseries, but by creating others, which are still more dangerous, in being more substantial. For these are the things, which chiefly bar us from our own thoughts, and which teach us to give new wings to our time, and yet to remain insensible of its flight. Without these, we should indeed be under a continued weariness and perplexity, yet such as might prompt us to seek out a better method for its cure. Whereas these, which we call our diversions, do but amuse and beguile us; and, in conclusion, lead us down blindfold into our grave. Mankind, having no infallible remedy against ignorance, misery, and death, imagine that some respite, some shelter, may at last be found, by agreeing to banish them from their meditation. This is the only comfort they have been able to invent under their numerous calamities; but a most miserable comfort it proves, because it does not tend to the removal of these evils, but only to the concealment of them for a short season; and because, in thus concealing them, it hinders us from applying such proper means as should remove them. Thus, by a strange revolution in the nature of man, that grief and inward disquiet, which he dreads as the greatest of sensible evils, is in

one respect his greatest good, because it might contribute, more than all things besides, to the putting him in a successful method of recovery. On the other hand, his recreation, which he seems to prize as his sovereign good, is indeed his greatest evil, because it is of all things the most effectual in making him negligent under his distemper; and both the one and the other are admirable proofs, as of man's misery and corruption, so of his greatness and dignity. For the reason, why he grows sick and weary of every object, and engages in such a multitude of pursuits, is, because he still retains the idea of his lost happiness; which, not finding within himself, he seeks it through the whole circle of external things; but always seeks without success, because it is indeed to be found not in ourselves, nor in the creatures, but in God alone.—*M. Pascal's Thoughts*, p. 203.

SECTION II.

HAPPINESS IN VIRTUE AND RELIGION.

HAPPINESS IN VIRTUE.—Having explained the moral *approbation* attending merit or virtue, there remains nothing but briefly to consider our interested *obligation* to it, and to inquire whether every man, who has any regard to his own happiness and welfare, will not best find his account in the practice of every moral duty.

Treating vice with the greatest candour, and making it all possible concessions, we must acknowledge, that there is not in any instance the smallest pretext

for giving it the preference above virtue, with a view to self interest, except perhaps in the case of justice, where a man, taking things in a certain light, may often seem to be a loser by his integrity. And, though it is allowed, that, without a regard to property, no society could subsist; yet, according to the imperfect way in which human affairs are conducted, a sensible knave, in particular incidents, may think that an act of iniquity or infidelity will make a considerable addition to his fortune, without causing any considerable breach in the social union or confederacy. That *honesty is the best policy* may be a good general rule; but is liable to many exceptions; and he, it may perhaps be thought, conducts himself with most wisdom, who observes the general rule, and takes advantage of all the exceptions.

I must confess, that, if a man think that this reasoning much requires an answer, it will be a little difficult to find any, which will to him appear satisfactory and convincing. If his heart rebel not against such pernicious maxims; if he feel no reluctance to the thoughts of villany or baseness, he has indeed lost a considerable motive to virtue; and we may expect that his practice will be answerable to his speculation. But, in all ingenuous natures, the antipathy to treachery and roguery is too strong to be counterbalanced, by any views of profit or pecuniary advantages. Inward peace of mind, consciousness of integrity, a satisfactory review of our own conduct; these are circumstances very requisite to happiness, and will be cherished and cultivated by every honest man, who feels the importance of them.

Such a one has, besides, the frequent satisfaction of seeing knaves, with all their pretended cunning and abilities, betrayed by their own maxims; and,

while they propose to cheat with moderation and secrecy, a tempting incident occurs, nature is frail, and they give into the snare; whence they can never extricate themselves without a total loss of reputation, and the forfeiture of all future trust and confidence with mankind. But, were they ever so secret and successful, the honest man, if he has any tincture of philosophy, or even common observation and reflection, will discover, that they themselves are, in the end, the greatest dupes, and have sacrificed the invaluable enjoyment of a character, with themselves at least, for the acquisition of worthless toys and gewgaws. How little is requisite to supply the necessities of nature? And, in a view to *pleasure*, what comparison between the unbought satisfaction of conversation, society, study, even health, and the common beauties of nature, but, above all, the peaceful reflection on one's own conduct: what comparison, I say, between these, and the feverish empty amusements of luxury and expense? These natural pleasures, indeed, are really without price; both because they are below all price in their attainment, and above it in their enjoyment.—*Hume's Essay's* vol. ii. p. 330. 334.

Virtue * alone is happiness. The happiness of a brute, that spends the greater part of his life in listlessness and sleep, is but one remove from the happiness of a plant, that is full of sap, vigour, and nutrition. The happiness of a man, who pursues licentious pleasure, is momentary; and his intervals of weariness and disgust perpetual. He speedily wears himself out in his specious career; and every time

* By virtue this author seems to understand a disinterested endeavour to promote the general good, and an indefatigable application to discover and employ the best means for advancing that end.

that he employs the means of delight, which his corporeal existence affords him, takes so much from his capacity of enjoyment. But the virtuous man has a perpetual source of enjoyment. It is impossible that any situation can occur, in which virtue cannot find room to expatiate. In society there is continual opportunity for its active employment. I cannot have intercourse with any human being, who may not be the better for that intercourse. If he be already just and virtuous, these qualities are improved by communication. If he be imperfect and erroneous, there must always be some prejudice I may contribute to destroy, some motive to delineate, some error to remove. If I be prejudiced and imperfect myself, it cannot however happen, that my prejudices and imperfections shall be exactly coincident with his. I may, therefore, inform him of the truths that I know; and even by the collision of prejudices, truth is elicited. It is impossible, that I should strenuously apply myself to his mind with sincere motives of benevolence, without some good being the result. Nor am I more at a loss in solitude. In solitude I may accumulate the materials of social benefit. No situation can be so desperate, as to preclude these efforts. Another advantage of virtue, in this personal view, is, that, while sensual pleasure exhausts the frame, and passions often excited become frigid and callous, virtue has exactly the opposite propensities. Passions, in the usual acceptation of that term, having no absolute foundation in the nature of things, delight only by their novelty. But the more we are acquainted with virtue, the more estimable it will appear; and its field is as endless as the progress of mind. If an enlightened love of it be once excited in the mind, it is impossible that it should not continually increase.

By its variety, by its activity, it perpetually renovates itself, and renders the intellect, in which it resides, ever new and ever young. All these reasonings are calculated to persuade us, that the most precious boon we can bestow upon another is virtue, that the highest employment of virtue is to propagate itself. But, as virtue is inseparably connected with knowledge in my own mind, so can it only by knowledge be communicated to others. How can the virtue we have just been contemplating be treated, but by infusing comprehensive views, and communicating energetic truths? Now that man alone is qualified to give these views, and communicate these truths, who is himself pervaded with them*.—*Godwin's Political Justice*, i. 233. 1793.

We are now to consider man, the intellectual being, a person knowing and practising virtue, to have still another step to make in order to arrive at the perfection of his nature. Now, this perfection he has to attain by studying himself as well as other people's sentiments, by acquiring a view of his proper nature, and loving virtue for its own sake, that is to say, loving virtue as the work of God, the end of his creation, and the cause of human happiness. If this be a thing merely chimerical, how comes it that the most enlightened men have always entertained those ideas? If, again, this be the real opinion of rational men, and actually proves a motive for their conduct, it must appear that we have now described the steps, in which human intellect had proceeded on that occasion.

Here, man, instead of being simply rational, be-

* This passage is a complete philosophical commentary and commendation of the Christian zeal and duty (so often denounced as fanatical) to edify one another, and to extend the knowledge of revealed truth.

comes refined ; here, man rises in the scale of beings, above the rank of vulgar men ; and here, man, who is naturally lord of the animal creation, becomes a ruler in the world of opinion, and acquires a just dominion in the mind of man. Here, wisdom has attained its end, in making man benevolent as well as powerful ; here, man has arrived at the proper end of his creation, in being happy as well as being wise ; and here, we may see the excellency of the system, in which man, the animal, is made to transform himself into the image of his maker. Here, man finds the approbation of his own mind to be the will of the Supreme Being, and the sting of a guilty conscience to be the necessary punishment of vice and crime. He finds that he is independent of every thing, but the laws of his Creator ; and that he has the means of making himself either most happy in the enjoyment of his nature, or most miserable in departing from the known path, in which he had been designed to proceed.

Man, arrived at this state, is as perfect as the nature of his being will admit. Like a God, he knows himself ; and, as a virtuous man, he knows the will of God. He is wise in knowing what concerns him most ; and he is happy in having nothing to allay the pleasure of his enjoyments. He is independent of fortune ; he is pleased with his species ; he is satisfied in himself ; and he is confident in his Creator. — *Hutton's Investigation*, iii. 488.

HAPPINESS IN THE HOPE OF FUTURITY.—For, as *Aristotle* says, “ That young men may be happy, but no otherwise than by hope ;” so must we all, being so taught by the Christian faith, acknowledge ourselves to be but children and minors, and think of no other

felicity, than that which is in hope of a future world.
—*Bacon's Essays.*

But whatever false notions, or shameful neglect of what is in their power, may put men out of their way to happiness, and distract them, as we see, into so different courses of life; this yet is certain, that morality, established upon its true foundations, cannot but determine the choice in any one that will but consider; and he that will not be so far a rational creature, as to reflect seriously upon infinite happiness and misery, must needs condemn himself, as not making that use of his understanding he should. The rewards and punishments of another life, which the Almighty has established, as the enforcements of his law, are of weight enough to determine the choice, against whatever pleasure or pain this life can shew, when the eternal state is considered but in its bare possibility, which nobody can make any doubt of. He that will allow exquisite and endless happiness to be but the possible consequence of a good life here, and the contrary state the possible reward of a bad one, must own himself to judge very much amiss, if he does not conclude, that a virtuous life, with the certain expectation of everlasting bliss, which may come, is to be preferred to a vicious one, with the fear of that dreadful state of misery, which it is very possible may overtake the guilty; or, at best, the terrible uncertain hope of annihilation. This is evidently so, though the virtuous life here had nothing but pain, and the vicious continual pleasure; which yet is, for the most part, quite otherwise, and wicked men have not much the odds to brag of, even in their present possession; nay, all things rightly considered, have, I think, even the worst part here. But, when infinite happiness is put in one scale, against infinite misery in the other, if the worst that comes

to the pious man, if he mistakes, be the best that the wicked can attain to, if he be in the right, who can, without madness, run the venture? Who, in his wits, would choose to come within a possibility of infinite misery, which, if he miss, there is yet nothing to be got by that hazard? Whereas, on the other side, the sober man ventures nothing against infinite happiness to be got, if his expectation comes to pass. If the good man be in the right, he is eternally happy; if he mistakes, he is not miserable, he feels nothing. On the other side, if the wicked be in the right, he is not happy; if he mistakes, he is infinitely miserable. Must it not be a most manifest wrong judgment, that does not presently see, to which side, in this case, the preference is to be given? I have forbore to mention any thing of the certainty or probability of a future state, designing here to shew the wrong judgment, that any one must allow he makes upon his own principles, laid how he pleases, who prefers the short pleasures of a vicious life upon any consideration, whilst he knows, and cannot but be certain, that a future life is at least possible.—*Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding*, vol. i. book ii. ch. 21.

But, upon stricter examination, I found that this aversion to home, this roving and restless disposition, proceeded from a cause, no less powerful than universal, from the native unhappiness of our frail and mortal state, which is incapable of all comfort, if we have nothing to divert our thoughts, and to call us out of ourselves.

I speak of those alone, who survey their own nature, without the views of faith and religion. 'Tis only one of the miracles of Christianity, that, by reconciling man to God, it restores him to his own good opinion; that it makes him able to bear the sight of

himself; and in some cases, renders solitude and silence more agreeable, than all the intercourse and action of mankind. Nor is it by fixing man in his own person, that it produceth these wonderful effects; it is by carrying him to God, and by supporting him under the sense of his miseries, with the hopes of an assured and complete deliverance in a better life.—*M. Pascal's Thoughts*, p. 192.

The pleasures of life are enjoyed by this man with as much, perhaps with more relish, than by the libertine. But then they do not pervert the heart. The only emotion they are capable of exciting there, is, gratitude and thankfulness to the beneficent Donor. The acquisition of knowledge is tasted by him with as much delight as it is by the philosopher, though it produces in them very different effects. The one it puffs up with pride and presumption; the other it fills with humility, and reverence for the Most High.

The man, who has fixed his heart upon the proper object, does not cease to taste with pleasure the common blessings of this life; neither does he fail to bestow the proper industry to acquire, and to preserve them. But then he considers them only as so many sugar plums given by the Creator to make his confinement to his prison of clay more palatable; which must have an end when his enlargement begins. He laments the unhappy condition of those, who seek after them as their chief good. He would neither acquire nor preserve them at the expense of doing one single act, that might forfeit the favour of his Maker and Benefactor: neither does he repine at the privation of them; knowing, that it could not happen without the will and pleasure of his Lord and Master, the Sovereign of the universe, to which his heart and will cheerfully submit.

Compare the happiness of this man with that of the greatest favourite of fortune, who has set his heart on other objects, and who has had the full gratification of all his appetites, so far as the course of humanity will permit; but who must die, and leave those enjoyments, uncertain what is to happen hereafter. This man enjoys, in common with the wise and the voluptuous of his rank in the world, all the sensual and mental pleasures in which they delight, without the alloy that must torture their minds, when they think of parting with them. But, then, he has in himself a constant source of unalloyed joy, to which they are utter strangers. The abundant goodness of the Giver of all those blessings, fills his soul with gratitude and thankfulness, and disposes him with joy to do what appears to him to be his duty; and consciousness of that happy disposition produces the most firm confidence and reliance on the favour and good will of his Omnipotent Benefactor; from which he is to look hereafter for joys of a different nature from those which in this life he slights, when they stand in the way of his duty. Every act of duty performed fills his soul with a placid, still satisfaction, that is sensibly felt, though not easily expressed.

A mouthful of meat bestowed on a hungry beggar, gives the heart of the donor more real satisfaction than the relish of the food gives pleasure to the craving stomach, or the most delicious dainty gives to the vitiated palates of the voluptuous. And the particular excellency of these enjoyments is, that no excess can surfeit or pall the appetite, no accident can deprive him of them.

To a man possessed of such an incorruptible stock of happiness, the pleasures of this life appear but mere baubles; and the privation of them a trifling

loss. Life itself he is disposed to resign with willingness, because to him death has no sting.—*Forbes's Reflections on Incredulity.*

Real happiness is to be found only in God himself; all other delights are but an empty shade, and are capable of yielding only a momentary satisfaction. Accordingly we see, that those who enjoy them in the greatest abundance, are quickly satiated; and this apparent felicity serves only to inflame their desires, and to disorder their passions by estranging them from the supreme good, instead of bringing them nearer to him. But true felicity consists in a perfect union with God, which cannot subsist without a love and a confidence in his goodness transcending all things; and this love requires a certain disposition of soul, for which we must be making preparation in this life—*Euler's Letters to a German Princess*, i. 504.

Let us learn to know our nature better, and through the delirium of our blind passions discover its wants: it is a God we feel the want of, a God, such as religion presents; a God, powerful and good, the first source of happiness, and who only can secure it to the human race: let us open all our faculties to that splendid light, that our hearts and minds may welcome it, and find pleasure in widely diffusing. Let us be penetrated in our youth, by the only idea ever necessary to our peace; let us strengthen it when in our full vigour, that it may support us in the decline of life. Ravishing beauties of the universe, what would ye be to us without this thought? Majestic power of the human mind, astonishing wonders of the thinking faculty, what could it represent if we separated it from its noble origin? Souls affectionate and impassioned, what would become of you without hope? Pardon, O master of the world, if,

not sufficiently sensible of my own weakness, and abandoning myself only to the emotions of my heart, I have undertaken to speak to men of thy existence, thy grandeur, and thy goodness! Pardon me if, lately agitated by the tumultuous waves of passion, I dare to raise my thoughts to the realms of eternal peace, where Thou more particularly exhibitest Thy glory and sovereign power. Ah! I know more than ever that we must love Thee, we must serve Thee.—*Necker's Religious Opinions*, p. 452.

I conclude, therefore, and say there is no happiness under the sun, nor any *crambe* in that repeated verity and burden of all the wisdom of Solomon, “all is vanity and vexation of spirit.” There is no felicity in that the world adores. That, wherein God himself is happy, the holy angels are happy, in whose defect the devils are unhappy; that dare I call happiness. Whatsoever conduceth unto this, may, with an easy metaphor, deserve that name. Whatsoever else the world terms happiness is to me a story out of Pliny, a tale of Boccace or Malispini, an apparition or neat delusion, wherein there is no more of happiness than the name. Bless me in this life with but peace of my conscience, command of my affections, the love of thyself, and my dearest friends, and I shall be happy enough to pity Cæsar. These are, O Lord, the humble desires of my most reasonable ambition, and all I dare call happiness on earth; wherein I set no rule or limit to thy hand of providence. Dispose of me according to the wisdom of thy pleasure. Thy will be done, though in my own undoing.—*Brown's Religio Medici*.

Upon the whole matter, I therefore conclude that the happiness of mankind is not to be found in this life, but is a flower that grows in the garden of eternity, and to be expected only in its full complement

and fruition in that life, which is to succeed after our bodily dissolution : that, although peace of conscience, tranquillity of mind, and the sense of the favour of God, that we enjoy in this life, like the bunches of grapes brought by the spies from Canaan, are the prelibations and anticipations of our happiness ; yet the complement of our happiness consists in the beatific vision of the ever-blessed God to all eternity, where there is a *vita perfecta* ; a perfect life, free from pain, from sorrow, from cares ; *vita perfecta*, a perfect life of glory and immortality, out of the reach or danger of death, or the loss of that happiness which we shall then enjoy in the presence of the ever-glorious God, in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore.—*Sir Matthew Hale's Contemplations*, ii. 12.

CHAPTER VII.

TESTIMONIES TO THE EVIDENCES AND EXCELLENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

SECTION I.

THE NEED OF A DIVINE REVELATION.

THE prerogative of God comprehends the whole man; and extends as well to the reason as to the will of man; to the end that man may renounce himself wholly, and draw near unto God. Wherefore, as we are to obey the divine law, though we find a reluctance in our will, so are we to believe the word of God, though we find a reluctance in our reason. But that "faith, which was accounted to Abraham for righteousness," was of such a point as that at which *Sarah* laughed; who therein was an image of natural reason. For, if we consider the thing aright, it is more worthy to believe than to know, as we now know; since in knowledge man's mind suffers from sense; but in belief it suffers from spirit, and such an one as it holds far more authorized than itself, and so suffers from the worthier agent. The case is otherwise in the state of glory; for then "faith shall cease, and we shall know as we are known."

Wherefore we may conclude, that sacred theology must be drawn from the word of God, not from the light of nature, or the dictates of reason. For it is written, "The heavens declare the glory of God:" but we find it no where written, the heavens declare the will of God. Of this it is pronounced,—*Ad legem et testimonia ; si non fecerint secundum verbum illud.* Nor does this hold only in those great mysteries of the Deity, of the creation, of the redemption, but appertains also to the moral law, truly interpreted. For it must be confessed, that a great part of the moral law is of that perfection, whereunto the light of nature cannot aspire. Though men have, even from the light and law of nature, some notions of virtue, vice, justice, wrong, good and evil, the light of nature is to be understood in two senses: first, as it springs from sense, induction, reason, argument, according to the laws of heaven and earth: secondly, as it is imprinted and shines upon the spirit of man, by an inward instinct, according to the law of conscience, which is a kind of spark and relic of his former and primitive purity: in which latter sense chiefly, the soul participates of some light to behold and discern the perfection of the moral law; which light, however, is not altogether clear, but of such sort as rather to check the vice, than fully to inform the duty; so then the doctrine of religion, as well moral as mystical, depends upon divine revelation.—*Bacon's Essays*, p. 331.

At the time of Christ's appearance, mankind, in general, were in a state of gross ignorance and darkness, with respect to the knowledge of God, and of themselves, and of all those moral relations and obligations, we stand in to the Supreme Being, and to one another. They were under great uncertainty concerning a future state, and the concern of Divine Pro-

vidence in the government of the world ; and, at the same time, were filled with a proud and a vain conceit of their own natural abilities and self-sufficiency. Our Saviour's doctrines on these heads, though they appeared to be the true and genuine principles of nature and reason, when he had set them in a proper light ; yet were such as the people had never heard or thought of before, and never would have known, without such an instructor, such means and opportunities of knowledge. They, who would judge uprightly of the strength of human reason in matters of morality and religion, under the present corrupt and degenerate state of mankind, ought to take their estimate from those parts of the world, which never had the benefit of revelation ; and this perhaps might make them less conceited of themselves, and more thankful to God for the light of the gospel. If the religion of nature, under the present pravity and corruption of mankind, was written with sufficient strength and clearness upon every man's heart, why might not a Chinese or an Indian draw up as good a system of natural religion as a Christian ; and why have we never met with any such ? Let us take Confucius, Zoroaster, Plato, Socrates, or the greatest moralist that ever lived, without the light of revelation, and it will appear, that their best systems of morality were intermixed and blended with so much superstition, and so many gross absurdities, as quite eluded and defeated the main design of them.—*Morgan's Moral Philosopher*, i. 144, 145.

Though the works of nature, in every part of them, sufficiently evidence a Deity, yet the world made so little use of their reason, that they saw him not, where, even by the impressions of himself, he was ever to be found. Sense and lust blinded their minds in some, and a careless inadvertency in others, and fearful ap-

prehension in most, (who either believed there were, or could not but suspect there might be, superior, unknown beings,) gave them up into the hands of their priests, to fill their heads with false notions of the Deity, and their worship with foolish rites, as they pleased: and what dread or craft once began, devotion soon made sacred, and religion immutable. In this state of darkness and ignorance of the true God, vice and superstition held the world. Nor could any help be had or hoped for from reason; which could not be heard, and was judged to have nothing to do in the case; the priests, every where, to recover their empire, having excluded reason from having any thing to do in religion. And in the crowd of wrong notions, and invented rites, the world had almost lost the sight of the one only true God. The rational and thinking part of mankind, it is true, when they sought after him, they found the one supreme, invisible God; but if they acknowledged and worshipped him it was only in their own minds. They kept this truth locked up in their own breasts as a secret, nor ever durst venture it amongst the people, much less amongst the priests, those wary guardians of their own creeds and profitable inventions. Thence we see, that reasonspeaking ever so clearly to the wise and virtuous, had never authority enough to prevail on the multitude; and to persuade the societies of men that there was but one God, that alone was to be owned and worshipped. The belief and worship of one God, was the national religion of the Israelites alone: and, if we will consider it, it was introduced and supported amongst the people by revelation. They were in Goshen, and had light, whilst the rest of the world were in almost Egyptian darkness, “without God in the world.” There was no part of mankind who had quicker parts, or improved them more; that had a greater light of reason, or followed it farther in

all sorts of speculations, than the Athenians ; and yet we find but one Socrates amongst them, that opposed and laughed at their polytheism, and wrong opinions of the Deity ; and we see how they rewarded him for it. Whatsoever Plato, and the soberest of the philosophers, thought of the nature and being of the one God, they were fain, in their outward professions and worship, to go with the herd, and keep to the religion established by law ; which, what it was, and how it had disposed the minds of these knowing and quick-sighted Grecians, St. Paul tells us, Acts xvii. 22—29.—*Locke on the Reasonableness of Christianity*, Works, vi. 135.

Deism, or the principles of natural worship, are only the faint remnants or dying flames of revealed religion in the posterity of Noah ; and our modern philosophers, nay, and some of our philosophizing divines, have too much exalted the faculties of our souls, when they have maintained, that by their force, mankind has been able to find out that there is one supreme agent, or intellectual being, which we call God ; that praise and prayer are his due worship ; and the rest of those deducements, which I am confident are the remote effects of revelation, and unattainable by our discourse, I mean as simply considered, and without the benefit of divine illumination. So that we have not lifted up ourselves to God by the weak pinions of our reason, but he has been pleased to descend to us ; and what Socrates said of him, what Plato writ, and the rest of the heathen philosophers of several nations, is all no more than the twilight of revelation, after the sun of it was set in the race of Noah. That there is something above us, some principle of motion, our reason can apprehend, though it cannot discover what it is by its own virtue. And indeed 'tis very improbable, that we, who,

by the strength of our faculties, cannot enter into the knowledge of any being, not so much as our own, should be able to find out by them that supreme nature, which we cannot otherwise define than by saying, it is infinite; as if infinite were definable, or infinity a subject for our narrow understanding. They, who would prove religion by reason, do but weaken the cause which they endeavour to support. It is to take away the pillars from our faith, and prop it only with a twig; it is to design a tower like that of Babel, which, if it were possible, as it is not, to reach heaven, would come to nothing by the confusion of the workmen. For every man is building a several way; impotently conceited of his own model, and of his own materials. Reason is always striving, always at a loss; and of necessity it must so come to pass, while it is exercised about that which is not its proper object. Let us be content at last to know God by his own methods; at least so much of him as he is pleased to reveal to us in the sacred Scriptures. To apprehend them to be the word of God, is all our reason has to do; for all beyond it is the work of faith, which is the seal of heaven impressed upon our human understanding.—*Dryden's Preface to his Relig. Laici.*

What a forsaken and disconsolate creature is a man without religion! Reader, whosoever thou art, deceive not thyself; let not passion, or prosperity, or wit, or wantonness, seduce thy reason to an attempt against the truth. If thou hast the faculties of a man, thou wilt never bring thyself to a fixed persuasion, that there is no God. Struggle how thou wilt against the notion, there will be a moment when the glaring conviction will burst upon thy mind. Now mark what follows—if there is a God, the government of the world is in that God; and this once ad

mitted, the necessity of a future state follows of consequence. Ask thyself then what can be the purposes of that future state; what but those of justice and retribution, to reward the good, and to punish the evil? Our present life then is a life of probation, a state of trial and of discipline, preparatory to that future state. Now see what is fallen upon thee, and look well to thyself for the consequences. Thou hast let the idea of a God into thy mind, because indeed thou couldst not keep it out, and religion rushes through the breach. It is natural religion hitherto, and no more. But no matter; there is enough even in natural religion to make thee tremble. Whither wilt thou now resort for comfort, whither fly for refuge from the wrath to come? Behold the asylum is open; Christianity is thy salvation and redemption. That, which natural religion hath shadowed out to thee in terrors, Christianity will reveal in glory. It will clear up thy doubts, disperse thy fears, and turn thy hopes into certainty. Thy reasonings about a future state, which are but reasonings, it will not only verify by divine authorities, but by positive proof, by visible example, attested by witnesses, confirmed by the evidence of the senses, and uncontradicted by the history of ages. Now thou wilt know, to thy comfort, that there is a mediator gone before thee, who will help out thy imperfect atonement*, when thou art brought to judgment in a future state. Thou wilt, indeed, be told for certain, that this life is a state of probation, and that thou shalt be brought to account for thine actions; but thou wilt be taught an easy lesson of salvation; thou wilt be cheered with

* This expression is obviously unscriptural, but the general strain of the passage is strongly expressive of the importance of redemption to human beings.

the mercies of thy God, and comforted with the assurance of pardon, if thou wilt heartily turn to repentance. Thou wilt find, that all this system of religion is conformable to those natural notions, which reason suggested to thee before, with this advantage, that it makes them clearer, purifies, refines, enlarges them; shuts out every dismal prospect, opens all that is delightful, and *points a road to heaven through paths of peace and pleasantness.*—*Cumberland's Observer*, (iii. 309.) No. 91.

The whole world, as is well known, was at that time drowned in impiety, profaneness, and ignorance, fallen into the last irregularity and dregs of licentiousness, giving themselves over to all manner of uncleanness and abominations, by which sins they were necessarily fallen under insupportable loads of guilt, and bound over to the inevitable punishment and vengeance of the Almighty, when he should come in his majesty and glory, to render a righteous reward unto every man according to his works. Of which the very heathens themselves were convinced, having found out by their natural ratiocinations that they were sinners, and obnoxious to the divine anger, as appears by their sacrifices and other rites. But now this was that which surpassed their most raised intellects, how their sins should be forgiven, and their obligation to punishment by reason of them be cancelled and annulled. They had, indeed, some general hopes of God's mercy, founded on the common bounty of his providence towards them, in giving them rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness, and the like, which they endeavoured to increase by their sacrifices, and other religious rites and ceremonies. But they had no positive assurance of the remission of their sins, and of the divine reconciliation of their persons, being

being still obscured and bewildered in their notions and apprehensions concerning it, never arriving unto any certain conclusion, that though the goodness of God did now attend them, yet that his justice, anger, and vengeance should not overtake and seize them another day, and severely punish them for all those innumerable and abominable sins, which they themselves were sensible they had most daringly committed against him. And as the heathens knew not how their sins could be forgiven, and their persons absolved from the guilt thereof; so neither had the Jews any perfect and certain apprehensions thereof. The mosaical law had appointed sacrifices for sins of ignorance, and for small and ordinary transgressions, by the regular and conscientious offering whereof those sins were remitted, and the anger of God appeased; but, as for greater and capital sins, such as murder, adultery, and the like, there was a sentence of death denounced against them, for the reversing of which the law had made no provision. This being then the condition of the world, at the time of our Saviour's appearing therein; they being all, both Jew and Gentile, concluded under sin, and not knowing which way to free themselves from the guilt and condemnation thereof, the apostles were sent forth with full power and authority to invite them both to come into the Christian church, which they were now founding; assuring them, that they should therein receive a complete and perfect remission of all their crimes, though never so innumerable and abominable. The entrance whereunto was by baptism, supposed to be accompanied with faith and repentance; when, for the sake of Christ, all the sins of the baptized person should be entirely obliterated and forgotten.—

Chancellor Sir Peter King on the Creed.

The same persons who treat the Christian religion

and its advocates with so much scorn, will probably (some of them at least) profess a regard to natural religion, and it may seem hard to question their sincerity. However, as far as has occurred to my observation, these persons either deceive themselves, or attempt to deceive others in this: there appears in them no love or fear of God, no confidence in him, no delight in meditating upon him, in praying to him or praising him, no hope or joy in a future state. Their hearts and treasures are upon this earth, upon sensual pleasures or vain amusements, perhaps of philosophy or philology, pursued to pass the time, upon honour or riches. And indeed there are the same objections, in general, to natural religion as to revealed, and no stronger evidences for it. On the contrary, the historical and moral evidences for the general truth of the Scriptures, which these persons deny, are more convincing and satisfactory to philosophical as well as to vulgar capacities, than the arguments, that are usually brought to prove the existence and attributes of God, his providence, or a future state: not but that these last are abundantly sufficient to satisfy an earnest and impartial inquirer.—*Hartley's Observations on Man*, ii. p. 442.

SECTION II.

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

GENERAL EVIDENCES.—Their disputes with the deists are almost at an end, since they can have no more than victory, and that they are already possessed of;

as their antagonists have been driven into a confession of the necessity of revelation, or an open avowal of atheism.—*Goldsmith's Essays*, No. 17, of ed. 1767.

And here I must observe to those who think the whole of Christianity to have been a fiction, and the founder a deceiver, that the deceit must have been the most extraordinary that ever was imposed upon the world. No impostor ever formed a scheme that was not to be discovered (made known) till after his death. Our Saviour, at this rate, went through a life of trouble, want, and persecution, to carry on a design, from which no emolument could ensue, and which was to be brought to light after his decease by persons who were not acquainted with it, and who were knowingly to undergo the same persecutions. Accordingly, upon the feast of Pentecost, when they met in full assembly, the Holy Ghost came upon them with an ample effusion; and they were gifted with that salutary knowledge, to which they were before strangers; and with the gift of tongues, by which they were enabled to convey it to the most distant countries. By these means the gospel of Christ triumphed over the learning of Greece and Rome, and the ignorance of other nations. These were two formidable obstacles, which could not, but by a miracle, be surmounted.—*Bryant on the Authenticity of Scripture*, 209.

These and a great many more instances may be alleged to shew, that a man needs not quit his reason to fulfil the conditions of the gospel, though it wanted demonstrative arguments. For the probability of obtaining inestimable blessings, and more than a probability of enduring unspeakable torments for their neglect, may reasonably induce a man to fulfil the conditions; and, it will justify his prudence, if it does but appear, that it is more probable some religion

should be true, than that so many attested miracles, alleged by the ancient Christians, should be false; and that God, who hath made the world and man, should leave him, whom he hath so fitted, and by internal laws obliged to worship him, undirected how to perform it. And that, if any religion be true, the excellence of its doctrines and promises, as also prophecies and miracles, that bear witness of it, make the Christian most likely; the records of it being made by honest, plain men, who practised, as well as taught, the strictest virtue, and knew that lying was condemned by their religion; and who freely joined their doctrines and relations with their blood; which was so evidently true in the times it was performed, that the evidence converted whole nations, many of which were considerable and prudent persons, who were both concerned and had opportunities to examine the truth of them; and whose education so much indisposed them to embrace Christianity, that, to profess it sincerely they were obliged to forsake both their former religion and vices, and expose their lives and fortunes for it.—*Honourable Robert Boyle's Theological Works.*

AUTHENTICITY OF SCRIPTURE.—Disquisitions concerning the manners and conduct of our species, in early times, or indeed at any time, are always curious at least, and amusing; but they are highly interesting to such as can say of themselves, with Chremes in the play, ‘We are men, and take an interest in all that relates to mankind.’ They may even be of solid importance in an age, when some intelligent and virtuous persons are inclined to doubt the authenticity of accounts delivered by Moses, concerning the primitive world; *since no modes or sources of reasoning can be unimportant, which have a tendency to re-*

move such doubts. Either the first eleven chapters of Genesis, (all due allowances being made for a figurative eastern style,) are true, or the whole fabric of our national religion is false; a conclusion, which none of us, I trust, would wish to be drawn. I, *who cannot help believing the Divinity* of the Messiah, from the undisputed antiquity, and manifest completion of many prophecies, especially those of Isaiah, in the only person recorded by history, to whom they are applicable, am obliged of course to believe the sanctity of the venerable books, to which that sacred person refers as genuine.—*Lord Teignmouth's Life of Sir W. Jones, 276.*

The divine legate, educated by the daughter of a king, and in all respects highly accomplished, could not but know the mythological system of Egypt, but he must have condemned the superstitions of that people, and despised the speculative absurdities of their priests, though some of their traditions concerning the creation and the flood, were founded on truth. Who was better acquainted with the mythology of Athens, than Socrates? who more accurately versed in the rabbinical doctrines, than Paul? Who possessed clearer ideas of all ancient astronomical systems, than Newton; or of scholastic metaphysics, than Locke? In whom could the Romish church have had a more formidable opponent, than in Chillingworth, whose deep knowledge of its tenets rendered him so competent to dispute them? In a word, who more exactly knew the abominable rites and shocking idolatry of Canaan, than Moses himself? Yet the learning of those great men only incited them to seek other sources of truth, piety, and virtue, than those in which they had long been immersed. There is no shadow then of a foundation for an opinion, that Moses borrowed the first nine or ten chapters of Ge-

nesis from the literature of Egypt ; still less can the adamantine pillars of our Christian faith be moved by the result of any debates on the comparative antiquity of the Hindus and Egyptians, or of any inquiries into the Indian theology.—*Lord Teignmouth's Life of Sir W. Jones*, 280.

It is out of dispute, that we have in our hands the gospels of Matthew and John, who give themselves out for eye and ear witnesses of all that Christ did and taught. Two channels were as sufficient as four to convey those doctrines to the world, and to preserve them in their original purity. The manner too in which these evangelists recorded them was much better adapted to this purpose, than that of Plato, or even of Xenophon, to preserve the doctrines of Socrates. The evangelists did not content themselves to give a general account of the doctrines of Christ in their own words ; nor presumed, in feigned dialogues, to make him deliver their opinions in his own name. They recorded his doctrines in the very words in which he taught them ; and they were careful to mention the several occasions, in which he delivered them to his disciples or others. If therefore Plato and Xenophon tell us, with a good degree of certainty, what Socrates taught ; the evangelists seem to tell us, with much more, what the Saviour taught and commanded them to teach.—*Bolingbroke's Works*, vol. iv. p. 390.

PROBABILITY OF CHRIST'S MISSION.—That there was such a person as Jesus Christ, and that he in the main did and taught as is recorded of him, appears to be probable, because it is improbable that Christianity should take place, in the way and to the degree that it did, or at least that we are told it did, supposing the history of Christ's life and ministry to be a

fiction. If such power attended Jesus Christ in the exercise of his ministry, as the history sets forth, then, seeing his ministry and the power that attended it, seems at least in general to have terminated in the public good, it is more likely, that God was the primary agent in the exercise of that power, than any other invisible being. And then it is probable, that Jesus Christ, upon whose will the immediate exercise of that power depended, would not use that power to impose upon and mislead mankind to their hurt, seeing that power appears to have been well directed and applied in other respects, and seeing he was accountable to his principal for the abuse of it. From these premises, and from this general view of the case, I think this conclusion follows, viz. it is probable Christ's mission was divine; at least it appears so to me, from the light or information I have received concerning it.

It may perhaps be a piece of justice due to Christianity, (could it be certainly intended what it is, and could it be separated from every thing that hath been blended with it,) to acknowledge, that it yields a much clearer light, and is a more safe guide to mankind, than any other traditionary religion, as being better adapted to improve and perfect human nature.—*Chubb's Posth. Works*, vol. ii. p. 41, 49. 394. 297*.

EVIDENCE FROM MIRACLES.—I may form this particular conclusion, that, according to the ordinary course of nature, the dead do not rise; but, I cannot

* It is to be recollected, that this author is deservedly counted among the deistical writers; and hence the importance of these admissions from his pen. They rest the question on the point of fact.

logically affirm, that there is not a secret dispensation of the physical order, of which the resurrection of the dead might be the result; and to affirm in general the *impossibility* of the resurrection of the dead, would be still more repugnant to sound logic. Were it even demonstrated further, that miracles can only be the result of an *immediate* act of omnipotence, that act would not imply a violation of physical order; because the legislator of nature does not violate his laws, whenever he suspends or modifies these laws, He does not act by a new will. Supreme intelligence beheld at once the whole series of things, and miracles entered from eternity into that series, as a condition of the greatest good.

This idea is clearly set forth by the author of the *Essay on Psychology*; although his style, often too concise, does not bring it within the comprehension of all readers: "Whenever," he says, "the course of nature appears suddenly altered, or interrupted, that interruption is termed a miracle, and is supposed to be an effect of an immediate act of God. Such a judgment may be proved false, and the miracle may be the result of second causes, or of a pre-established arrangement. The essential good, which was to result from it, might require this arrangement or exception to the ordinary laws; but if there are miracles which imply an immediate act of God, this act became part of the plan, as a necessary means for happiness; in both cases the effect is the same with respect to faith."—*Bonnet's Enquiries concerning Christianity*, 43.

These means were MIRACLES; for nothing could be better adapted to prove to mankind, that the author of nature had spoken, than miracles. But, had miracles been wrought in every place and in every time, they would have fallen into the ordinary course of nature, and

would no longer have been sufficient to ascertain, that the supreme author of nature had *spoken*. It became therefore necessary, that miracles should be wrought in certain places, and at certain times. They were; then, to be submitted to the rules of testimony, as are all other facts. Reason, therefore, was to apply these rules, and by this application to judge of the reality of the facts. And because these facts were miraculous, and because, to obtain belief, miraculous facts require a greater number of testimonies, and testimonies of superior force, it was agreeable to the nature of this species of proof, that it should be given by witnesses who united, in the highest degree, those conditions that establish in the eye of reason, the credibility of any fact whatever; I say of *any fact whatever*, because it seems very evident to me, that miracles are not less facts, although those facts are not comprised within the sphere of the common laws of nature. I have already observed elsewhere, that reason will acquiesce in those proofs of facts which the miracles afford, if, after applying to those proofs the rules of sound criticism and exact logic, they appear to be established on a solid basis.—*Bonnet's Enquiries concerning Christianity*, 274.

Besides, amidst these proofs, are there not some that may be easily comprehended by the most limited capacities? How admirably calculated is the moral excellence of Christ, to make deep impressions on virtuous and feeling minds! How much does the character of the institutor himself excite the admiration and veneration of every sincere friend to truth and virtue! Much of the same sublimity of character appears in the conduct of the first disciples. What a life! What morals! What excellent models! What benevolence! What charity! Are such things beyond the reach of the multitude? And are these

things destitute of power to influence their minds? They will not believe, perhaps, on the authority of so many proofs as a divine; but they will believe on those proofs, which are most within their comprehension; nor will their belief on that account be the less rational, the less practical, or the less comfortable.—*Bonnet's Enquiries concerning Christianity, 277.*

Celsus, it is well known, was a very learned man, and wrote in the time of Adrian, or some thing later: this was not above fifty years after the date of Christ's miracles. Celsus did not controvert the accounts of them, who were witnesses of the miracles, nor attempt to shew any inconsistency or chicanery in the facts themselves; he takes up, at second hand, the old pharisaical argument of ascribing them to the power of the devil. In short, they were performed, he cannot deny it; there was no trick or artifice in the performance, he cannot discover any; the accounts of them are no forgeries, he cannot confute them; they are recent histories, and their authenticity too notorious to be called into question; he knows not how the miracles were performed, and therefore they were done by the invocation of the devil; he cannot patiently look on, and see that learning, so long the glory of all civilized nations, and which he himself was to an eminent degree possessed of, now brought into disgrace by a new religion professing to be a divine revelation, and originating among the meanest and most odious of all the provincial nations, and propagated by disciples, who were as much despised and hated by the Jews in general, as the Jews were by all other people. Unable to disprove the account, and at a loss how to parry it from hearsay, or from what he finds in former writers, he has no other resource but to bring forward again those cavilling pharisees, and roundly to assert in general terms (which he does

more than once) that these miracles are all *the tricks of a sorcerer*, and for this he expects the world should take his authority.

I have said that Celsus adduces neither oral nor written authority against Christ's miracles ; but I am well aware it may be said (and modern cavillers will affect to say it with triumph) that authorities are silent on the subject ; *there are none which make mention of those miracles, at least none have come to our times.*

If this silence implies a want of collateral evidence, which in the opinion of our modern disbelievers vitiates the authenticity of the gospel, how much stronger would the argument have been in Celsus's time than in ours ! Why does he not avail himself of it ? And why does he take such pains to controvert accounts, of which no man had ever spoken either in proof or disproof ? May it not be fairly presumed, that he forbears to urge it from plain conviction, that it would operate the contrary way to what he wished ; and that the reason why contemporary writers were silent, was not because they were ignorant of the facts, but because they could not confute them ? Here then we will leave the case for the present ; the heathen writers, contemporary with Christ, make no mention of his miracles ; they are interested to disprove them, and they do not disprove them ; modern unbelievers think this a reason that those miracles were never performed ; Celsus writes fifty years after the time ; never urges this silence as an argument for their non-existence ; but virtually, nay expressly, admits Christ's miracles, by setting up Pythagoras's in competition with them.—*Cumberland's Observer*, No. 12.

CHARACTER OF JESUS CHRIST.—To insist upon the miracles relative to Christ, would be to insist upon that, which would have but little effect upon the minds of

anti-christians, who, if they believe not the religion, will certainly give no credit to the relation of the facts. But I may be permitted to insist upon the *undeniable truth*, that in the history of mankind, Christ is the only founder of a religion, who has been proved to have been totally regardless of interested and selfish considerations. All others, Numa, Mahommed, and even Moses himself, blended their religious institutions with their civil, and by them obtained dominion over their respective people; but Christ never aimed at, nor would accept of any consequence or power; he rejected every object, which all other men pursue, and made choice of all those, which all other men fly from, and are afraid of: he refused authority, riches, honour, and pleasure; and courted poverty, ignominy, torture, and death. Who ever, before or after him, made his own sufferings and death a necessary part of his original plan, and fundamentally and absolutely essential to the success of his mission?

Christ did not, like the philosophers of the heathens, content himself with scholastic speculations and reasonings about virtue and religion, and then leave the noble cause to fight for itself. He did not pretend to philosophize, where he dared not undertake. But after he had introduced and recommended his divine system to the world, and that not only by the intrinsic sublime energy of his doctrines, upon the hearts and consciences of men, but by his immaculate and exemplary life, he died a martyr in its defence, and sealed its verity with his blood. Here then, surely, I might put the authority of Christ, and the credit of Christianity, to issue. Let any nation upon earth, besides Christians, make it appear, that the authors and founders of any of their several religions, did not in many instances give up the cause of

virtue, to comply with the prevailing prejudices of the people, and to guard themselves in safety; nay, that they did not intermix and blend the grossest absurdities in belief, with the grossest immoralities in practice; let them do this, and the name of Christ shall stoop to give place to any other name under heaven, that can plead a better title to the universal honour, love, and veneration of our species.—*Sullivan's View of Nature*, vol. vi. letter xc.

I will confess to you farther, that the majesty of the Scriptures strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the gospel hath its influence on my heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers, with all their pomp of diction, how mean, how contemptible are they, compared with the Scripture! Is it possible that a book, at once so simple and sublime, should be merely the work of man? Is it possible that the sacred personage, whose history it contains, should be himself a mere man? Do we find that he assumed the air of an enthusiast or ambitious sectary? What sweetness, what purity in his manners! What an affecting gracefulness in his delivery! What sublimity in his maxims! What profound wisdom in his discourses! What presence of mind, what subtilty, what truth in his replies! How great the command over his passions! Where is the man, where the philosopher, who could so live, and so die, without weakness and without ostentation? When Plato described his imaginary good man, loaded with all the shame of guilt, yet meriting the highest rewards of virtue, he describes exactly the character of Jesus Christ: the resemblance was so striking, that all the fathers perceived it.

What prepossession, what blindness must it be, to compare the son of Sophroniscus to the son of Mary! What an infinite disproportion there is between them! Socrates, dying without pain or ignominy, easily sup-

ported his character to the last; and if his death, however easy, had not crowned his life, it might have been doubted whether Socrates, with all his wisdom, was any thing more than a vain sophist. He invented, it is said, the theory of morals; others, however, had before put them in practice: he had only to say, what they had done, and reduce their examples to precepts. Aristides had been *just*, before Socrates defined justice; Leonidas gave up his life for his country, before Socrates declared patriotism to be a duty; the Spartans were a sober people, before Socrates recommended sobriety; before he had even defined virtue, Greece abounded with virtuous men. But where could Jesus learn, among his compatriots, that pure and sublime morality, of which he only hath given us both precept and example? The greatest wisdom was made known amidst the most bigoted fanaticism; and the simplicity of the most heroic virtues did honour to the vilest people on the earth. The death of Socrates, peaceably philosophizing with his friends, appears the most agreeable that could be wished for; that of JESUS expiring in the midst of agonizing pains, abused, insulted, cursed by a whole nation, is the most horrible that could be feared. Socrates, in receiving the cup of poison, blessed, indeed, the weeping executioner who administered it; but JESUS, in the midst of excruciating tortures, prayed for his merciless tormentors. Yes, if the life and death of Socrates are those of a sage, the life and death of JESUS are those of a God. Shall we suppose the evangelic history a mere fiction? Indeed, my friend, it bears not the marks of fiction; on the contrary, the history of Socrates, which nobody presumes to doubt, is not so well attested as that of JESUS CHRIST. Such a supposition; in fact, only shifts the difficulty, without removing it: it is more inconceivable that a

number of persons should agree to write such a history; than that one only should furnish the subject of it. The Jewish authors were incapable of the diction, and strangers to the morality contained in the gospel, the marks of whose truth are so striking and inimitable, that the inventor would be a more astonishing character than the hero.—*Rousseau's Emilius*, vol. ii. p. 215*.

INTERNAL EVIDENCES.—Though it has pleased the merciful wisdom of God to scatter proofs of his revelation over all the ancient nations, and to preserve documents of them down to our days, for the conviction of obstinate infidels, and for the confirmation of the faith of the inquisitive, who believe; yet, happily for the bulk of mankind, who have neither time nor talents for such inquiries, revelation is so calculated, as to require nothing of man, that his conscious soul does not see to be his duty; and to promise him nothing, that does not appear to his most inward sense, to be the necessary consequence of doing it. By it he is acquainted with his forlorn condition; which he needs do no more to discover to be truth, than to turn his eyes inward upon himself. And a remedy is pointed out adequate to the disease, which tends to magnify the mercy, the wisdom, and the goodness of the Creator; and to tie the creature to him, by still stronger bonds of duty and gratitude. In this system there is such harmony between duty and interest, and therefore such a propensity in every sober-thinking person to wish it to be true, that, from the declared opi-

* “Rousseau is not what you think him,” said Mr. Hume to the Earl of Charlemont; “he has a hankering after the Bible; and, indeed, is little better than a Christian in a way of his own.” *Hardy's Life of the Earl of Charlemont*, i. 230.

nions of others, better qualified to judge of the evidence, and to determine, it gains belief; and that very belief, influencing the practice, brings real tranquillity and happiness in this life, springing from confidence of the favour of the Almighty; a sure earnest of future felicity. By the debauched and the giddy, who have delivered themselves over, soul and body, to their lusts, and to their vanity, this aptitude, this harmony is not discovered. Their fears make them wish it may not be true. Objections are rife in every corner; and if any inquiry is made into the proofs, it is with an intent to object, and to find them insufficient.—*President Forbes's Reflections on Incredulity.*

Many of the objections to Christianity are owing to misrepresentations of it. Let the New Testament be consulted. Does it ascribe to God a character worthy of the Creator of the universe, and the Father of men? Does it clear and extend the view of his wisdom and benevolence? Does it make the way to communion with him more plain and pleasant? Is the appointment of a Mediator analagous to the ways of Providence, expressive of divine condescension, and suited to human nature? Is it consoling to the heart, under a sense of guilt, to be assured of pardon? Does moral excellence, made perfect by suffering, seem to be a sacrifice which God will accept? Is it natural to the mind of man to feel admiration and love at the view of moral excellence, and yield to its transforming influence? Take a view of man in his low estate. Think if it be godlike to send glad tidings to the poor, if it be godlike to console the miserable, and if the sympathy of an affectionate and powerful friend be a strong consolation? Does the doctrine of a resurrection fall in with our predilec-

tion for these bodies, and open, as it were, to the eye of sense, the prospect of immortality? And does the doctrine of judgment accord with the natural feeling, that we are accountable? Do the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which followed, illustrate and ratify his important doctrine of a state of trial, preparatory to a state of retribution?

Judge Christianity by its effects. Does it kindle love to God and man, and establish the authority of conscience, and reconcile you to your lot? If your child be satisfied that Christ is a teacher sent from God, and is willing to be his disciple, it is meet to confess him before men. The celebration of his death, is a proper testimony of regard. Such a benefactor deserves to be had in everlasting remembrance.—
Lord Kames on the Culture of the Heart.

What opinion will be formed of this association (of the illuminati) by the modest, the lowly minded, the candid, who acknowledge that they too often feel the superior force of present and sensible pleasures, by which their minds are drawn off from the contemplation of what their consciences tell them to be right, to be their dutiful and filial sentiments and emotions respecting their great and good parent, to be their dutiful and neighbourly affections and their proper conduct to all around them, and which diminish their veneration for that purity of thought and moderation of appetite, which becomes their noble natures? What must they think of this order. Conscious of frequent faults, which would offend themselves, if committed by their dearest children, they look up to their Maker with anxiety, are grieved to have so far forgotten their duty, and fearful that they may again forget it. Their painful experience tells them, that their reason is often too weak, their information too scanty, or its light is obstructed by passions and prejudices, which

distort and discolour every thing, as it is unheeded during their attention to present objects. Happy should they be, if it should please their kind parent to remind them of their duty from time to time, or to influence their mind in any way, that would compensate for their own ignorance, their own weakness, or even their indolence and neglect. They dare not expect such a favour, which their modesty tells them they do not deserve, and which they fear may be unfit to be granted; but, when such a comfort is held out to them, with eager hearts they receive it, they bless the kindness that granted it, and the hand that brings it. Such amiable characters have appeared in all ages, and in all situations of mankind. They have not in all instances been wise; often have they been precipitate, and have too readily caught at any thing which pretended to give them the so much wished for assistances; and unfortunately there have been enthusiasts or villains, who have taken advantage of this universal wish of anxious men; and the world has been darkened by cheats, who have misrepresented God to mankind, have filled us with vain terrors, and have then quieted our fears by fines, and sacrifices, and mortifications, and services, which they said were more than sufficient to expiate all our faults. Thus was our duty to our neighbours, to our own dignity, and to our Maker and parent, kept out of sight, and religion no longer came in aid to our sense of right and wrong; but, on the contrary, by these superstitions, it opened the doors of heaven to the worthless and the wicked. But I wish not to speak of those men, but of the good, the candid, the MODEST, the HUMBLE, who know their failings, who love their duties, but wish to know, to perceive, and to love them still more. These are they, who think and believe that “the gospel has brought life and immortality to

light,"—that it is within their reach. They think it worthy of the father of mankind, and they receive it with thankful hearts, admiring above all things the simplicity of its morality, comprehended in one sentence, "do to another what you can reasonably wish that another should do to you;" and THAT PURITY OF THOUGHT AND MANNERS, WHICH DISTINGUISHES IT FROM ALL THE SYSTEMS OF MORAL INSTRUCTION THAT HAVE EVER BEEN OFFERED TO MEN. Here they find a ground of resignation under the troubles of life, and a support in the hour of death quite suited to the diffidence of their own character.—*Robison's Proofs of a Conspiracy*, p. 239 *.

SECTION III.

EXCELLENCIES OF THE SCRIPTURES.

IT is impossible to imagine a chaster language than that of the Bible; and this is because every thing is mentioned there with great simplicity.—*Rousseau's Emilius*, ii. p. 251.

These objections are but the conclusions and fallible discourses of man upon the word of God, for such do I believe the Holy Scriptures, yet, were it of man, I could not choose but say, it was the singularlest and superlative piece, that hath been extant since the creation. Were I a pagan, I should not refrain the lecture of it.—*Brown's Religio Medici*.

* See particularly on this subject, Mr. Erskine's Remarks on the Internal Evidence for the Truth of Revealed Religion."

This book appears to me unexampled, and absolutely inimitable. The sublimity of thought, the majesty and simplicity of expression ; the beauty, the purity, I could almost say, the *homogeneity* of the doctrine ; the importance, the universality, and the expressive brevity and paucity of the precepts ; their admirable appropriation to the nature and wants of man ; the ardent charity, which so generously enforces the observation of them ; the affecting piety, force, and gravity of the composition ; the profound and truly philosophical sense, which I discover in it ; these are the characters which fix my attention to the book I examine, and which I do not meet with, in the same degree, in any production of the human mind. I am equally affected with the candour, the ingenuousness, the modesty, I should have said the humility, of the writers, and that unexampled and constant forgetfulness of themselves, which never admits their own reflections, or the smallest eulogium in reciting the actions of their master.—*Bonnet's Enquiries concerning Christianity*, 89.

How extraordinary, how interesting the work, that begins with Genesis, and ends with the Revelations ; which opens in the most perspicuous style, and concludes in the most figurative ! May we not justly assert, that, in the books of Moses, all is grand and simple, like that creation of the world, and that innocence of primitive mortals, which he describes ; and that all is terrible and supernatural in the last of the prophets, like those civilized societies, and that consummation of ages, which he has represented ?

The productions most foreign to our manners, the sacred books of the infidel nations, the Zendavesta of the Parsees, the Vidam of the Bramins, the Coran of the Turks, the Edda of the Scandinavians, the Sanscrit poems, the maxims of Confucius, excite in us no

surprise ; we find in all these works the ordinary chain of human ideas ; they have all some resemblance to each other both in tone and ideas. The Bible alone is like none of them : it is a monument detached from all the others. Explain it to a Tartar, to a Caffre, to an American Savage ; put it into the hands of a bonze or a dervise, they will be all equally astonished by it,—a fact which borders on the miraculous. Twenty authors, living at periods very distant from one another, composed the sacred books ; and, though they are written in twenty different styles, yet these styles, equally inimitable, are not to be met with in any other performance. The New Testament, so different in its spirit from the Old, nevertheless partakes with the latter of this astonishing originality.

But this is not the only extraordinary thing, which men unanimously discover in the Scriptures : those, who will not believe in the authenticity of the Bible, nevertheless believe, in spite of themselves, that there is something more than common in this same Bible. Deists and atheists, small and great, all attracted by some hidden magnet, are incessantly referring to that work, which is admired by the one, and despised by the others. There is not a situation in life, for which a text, apparently dictated with an express reference to it, may not be found in the Bible. It would be a difficult task to persuade us, that all possible contingencies, both prosperous and adverse, had been foreseen, with all their consequences, in a book formed by the hand of man. Now, it is certain, that we find in the Scriptures, the origin of the world, and the prediction of its end—the groundwork of all the human sciences :—all the political precepts from the patriarchal government to despotism ; from the pastoral ages to the ages of corruption :—all the moral precepts applicable to all the ranks and to all the incidents of life :—finally, all sorts of known styles,—styles which,

forming an inimitable work of many different parts, have nevertheless no resemblance to the styles of men.—*Chateaubriand's Beauties of Christianity*, ii. 193.

Theological inquiries are no part of my present subject; but I cannot refrain from adding, that the collection of tracts, which we call, from their excellence, the *Scriptures*, contain, independently of a divine origin, more true sublimity, more exquisite beauty, purer morality, more important history, and finer strains both of poetry and eloquence, than could be collected, within the same compass, from all other books that ever were composed in any age, or in any idiom. The two parts of which the *Scriptures* consist, are connected by a chain of compositions, which bear no resemblance in form or style to any that can be produced from the stores of Grecian, Indian, Persian, or even Arabian learning; the antiquity of those compositions no man doubts, and the unstrained application of them to events long subsequent to their publication, is a solid ground of belief, that they were genuine compositions, and consequently inspired.—*Lord Teignmouth's Life of Sir W. Jones*, 288.

The language of the inspired writings is, on this as on other occasions, beautifully accommodated to the irresistible impressions of nature; availing itself of such popular and familiar words, as *upwards* and *downwards*, *above* and *below*, in condescension to the frailty of the human mind, governed so much by sense and imagination, and so little by the abstractions of philosophy. Hence the expression of *fallen* angels, which, by recalling to us the eminence from which they fell, communicates, in a single word, a character of sublimity to the bottomless abyss:—“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning.”—*Stewart's Philosophical Essays*, p. 376.

My friend, Sir William Russel, was distantly related to a very accomplished man, who, though he never believed the gospel, admired the Scriptures as the sublimest composition in the world, and read them often. I have been intimate myself with a man of fine taste, who has confessed to me, that though he could not subscribe to the truth of Christianity itself, yet he never could read St. Luke's account of our Saviour's appearance to the two disciples going to Emmaus, without being wonderfully affected by it; and he thought, that, if the stamp of divinity was any where to be found in Scripture, it was strongly marked and visibly impressed upon that passage. If these men, whose hearts were chilled with the darkness of infidelity, could find such charms in the mere style of the Scriptures, what must they find there, whose eye penetrates deeper than the letter, and who firmly believe themselves interested in all the invaluable privileges of the Gospel? "He that believeth on me, is passed from death unto life," though it be as plain a sentence as words can form, has more beauties in it for such a person, than all the labours antiquity can boast of. If my poor man of taste, whom I have just mentioned, had searched a little further, he might have found other parts of the sacred history as strongly marked with the character of divinity as that he mentioned. The parable of the prodigal son, the most beautiful fiction that ever was invented; our Saviour's speech to his disciples, with which he closes his earthly ministration, full of the sublimest dignity and tenderest affection, surpass every thing that I ever read, and, like the spirit by which they were dictated, fly directly to the heart. If the Scripture did not disdain all affectation of ornament, one should call these, and such as these, the ornamental parts of it; but the

matter of it is that, upon which it principally stakes its credit with us; and the style, however excellent and peculiar to itself, is only one of those many external evidences, by which it recommends itself to our belief.—*Comper's Letters, in his Life by Hayley, Letter vii.*

But, notwithstanding what we have said, in defence of the coherence and method of the Scriptures, yet I cannot deny, but that there are some things, which my reason cannot give a satisfactory account of; but, when I consider how many things I once thought incoherent, which I afterwards discerned the connexion of; and, when I consider the ends of the Scripture, and the author; and, when I consider the symmetry, which omniscience already does, and future ages will discover in the Scriptures, I cannot but check my inclinations, that would pretend to know all the ends of omniscience, or to judge of the fitness of his means for ends unknown to me; nor can I question the wisdom of the author, nor an interest so unbiassed, that it would choose none but the fittest method. Nor is it less a fault to consider only the sense of particular sections, though each part of it shews its heavenly extraction; but he that considers the whole body of those canonical writings, and shall compare them with one another, the contexture will appear so admirable, that it will manifestly appear to be the work of the same wisdom, that composed the books of nature, and the fabric of the world. The books in Scripture expound one another; Genesis and the Revelations being reciprocal comments, and, like the mariner's compass, though the needle stand north, yet it discovers both east and west; and so do some texts help to explain one another, though much distant in the Bible, and seem to be so in sense. It is a very great satisfaction to see how the sacred writers

supply one another's omissions, according to the degrees and seasons, that God dispenses the knowledge of his truths and mysteries in the different ages of the church, (at the first vouchsafing but a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawning, 2 Pet. i. 39.) and to find so much harmony betwixt writers, separated by so much time and space; their differences serving only to shew the sincerity and uprightness of the writers.—*Hon. Robert Boyle's Theological Works.*

SECTION IV.

EXCELLENCIES OF CHRISTIANITY.

GENERAL EXCELLENCIES.—This mild usage of the enemies of Christianity (which is however what is but in justice due to them) will make it more indispensably incumbent on those of them, who are not at the same time enemies to all virtue, to consider Christianity, not as laid down in the system of its professors, but in the Scriptures; not in the spirit of cavilling and pride, but of judgment and candour: And then see whether it does not consist of a scheme of doctrines every way fit for a rational creature to entertain; of precepts tending to make every man as happy in himself, and as useful and agreeable to others, as this state of things will admit; as giving proper encouragements to the practice of these pre-

cepts, by condescending to assure guilty men, in a method the most suited to remove all their bodings and suspicions, that their past sins shall be pardoned on repentance ; that they shall be powerfully assisted to practise the precepts of religion better for the future, if they will do all that is in their own power towards it ; that they shall be supported under all difficulties and trials, and eternally rewarded for their self-denials and sufferings * with manly gratifications and inconceivable glory in the life to come. And that all this is evidenced by the resurrection and ascension of Christ (testified by eye and ear witnesses, who were far from being forward to believe or attest it ;) and likewise by his exaltation at the right hand of God or to all power, testified together with his resurrection and ascension by the Holy Ghost, or these gifts of the Holy Ghost given to these witnesses in a superior degree, and to others in a less, in an instant, according to our Saviour's precise prediction, and with the peculiar circumstances which have been mentioned : And then let them consider who act the most rationally, they who believe such a religion on this evidence, or they who disbelieve it, purely because the connexion, the New Testament is said to have with some parts of the Old, cannot now be made out so as to be free from all exceptions. This testimony of the Apostles and of the Spirit is the impregnable work, on which Christianity is built and whose foundations cannot be shaken. For the truth of this religion is founded on facts ; namely the resurrection and ascension of Christ, attested by eye and ear witnesses, and (together with his exaltation) attested by other facts, namely, the gifts of the spirit, which prove

* Not as thereby meriting eternal rewards ; but as thereby made meet for a heavenly life.

the truth of the first beyond all possibility of exception ; and the truth of these last facts is proved by the best and only evidence they are capable of. And as this proof is a proof of a very few plain facts, and the evidence of these facts clear and easy, it must be allowed to be a proof of the Christian religion level to the meanest capacity.—*Lord Barrington's Essay on the teaching and witness of the Holy Spirit, apud finem.*

The knowledge of this pure religion requires no metaphysical reasoning, either with regard to the nature of God, or to the essence of our thinking principle ; it is adapted to the common understanding of mankind ; and it is founded upon the rational principles of human nature. It is impossible to refuse our assent, to a religion, which exacts no more than every man, in his dispassionate moments, is heartily disposed to contribute ; and it is impossible to refuse giving adoration to a God, who asks no more of man than that he should learn to make himself most happy. Here is the second epoch in the reformation of the original barbarous* religion of the Hebrews ; and here we may congratulate mankind upon the happy event, of a pure religion introduced into the world, in a form, which to common sense is plainly intelligible, and in a spirit, which is consonant to perfect virtue and philosophy. The most evident marks of divine approbation appeared upon this occasion. For, this new doctrine of benevolence corresponding with its type, (the law of God, which is

* The divine authority of the Old Testament must be admitted by all who believe that of the New Testament ; but it may no doubt be allowed, that the former dispensation, though by no means deserving the epithet barbarous, was less spiritual in its nature, and less calculated for an advanced state of society.

written in the heart of man,) made a conquest upon opinion, in opposition to force and the most rooted superstition; and it was received by the nations as the immediate gift of Heaven, sent to make those happy who embraced it.—*Hutton's Investigation*, iii. 665.

If my religion be false, it is, I must own, the most artful snare that could possibly be devised: it is impossible to avoid falling into it, and being caught. What majesty, what magnificence in its mysteries! what coherency, what connexion in all its doctrines. What sound reason! what candour! what innocence of morals! what an invincible and overwhelming body of evidence is given successively, and for three whole centuries, by millions of the most learned and most moderate persons then in the world, and whom the conviction of one and the same truth supported in exile, in fetters, at the approach of death, and under the most cruel torments.—*La Bruyere, as quoted in Chateaubriand's Beauties of Christianity*, ii. 289.

It is indeed impossible to understand the doctrines of our religion, and not to *wish at least*, that they may be true; for they exhibit the most comfortable views of God and his providence; they recommend the purest and most perfect morality; and they breathe nothing throughout, but benevolence, equity, and peace. And one may venture to affirm, that no one ever wished the gospel to be true, who did not *find* it so. Its evidence is even more than sufficient to satisfy those, who love it. And every man, who knows it, must love it, if he be a man of candour and a good heart.—*Beattie's Elements of Moral Science*, i. 402.

Here I invite that reader, who can elevate his mind to the contemplation of the ways of Providence, to meditate with me on the admirable methods of divine wisdom in the establishment of Christianity; a religion, the universality of which was to comprehend all

ages, all places, nations, ranks, and situations in life ; a religion, which made no distinction between the crowned head and that of the lowest subject ; formed to disengage the heart from terrestrial things, to ennoble, to refine, to sublime the thoughts and affections of man ; to render him conscious of the dignity of his nature, the importance of his end, to carry his hopes even to eternity, and thus associate him with superior intelligences ; a religion, which gave every thing to the spirit, and nothing to the flesh ; which called its disciples to the greatest sacrifices, because men who are taught *to fear God alone*, can undergo the severest trials ; a religion, in short, (to conclude my weak conceptions on so sublime a subject,) which was the perfection or completion of natural law, the science of the truly wise, the refuge of the humble, the consolation of the wretched ; so majestic in its simplicity, so sublime in its doctrine, so great in its object, so astonishing in its effects.—*Bonnet's Enquiries concerning Christianity*, b. v. ch. 6.

Every religion has its mysteries ; all nature is a secret. The Christian mysteries are the most sublime that can be ; they are the archetypes of the system of man and of the world. Faith is a force, charity a love, hope complete happiness, or, as religion expresses it, a complete virtue. The laws of God constitute the most perfect code of natural justice. The fall of our first parents is an universal tradition. A new proof of it may be found in the constitution of the moral man, which is contrary to the general constitution of beings. The prohibition to touch the fruit of knowledge was a sublime command, and the only one worthy of the Almighty. All the proofs of the antiquity of the earth alleged by profane writers may be contested. The doctrine of the existence of a God is demonstrated by the wonders of the universe ; a

design of Providence is evident in the instincts of animals. Mortality of itself proves the immortality of the soul: man feels a desire of happiness, and is the only creature who cannot attain it; there is consequently a felicity beyond the present life; for we cannot wish for what does not exist. The system of atheism is founded solely on exceptions; it is not the body that acts upon the soul, but the soul that acts upon the body. Man is not subject to the general laws of matter; he diminishes where the animal increases. Atheism cannot be beneficial to any class of people; neither to the unfortunate, whom it bereaves of hope, nor to the prosperous, whose joys it renders insipid, nor to the soldier, of whom it makes a coward, nor to the wife, whose beauty it blasts and whose sensibilities it extinguishes, nor to the mother, who has a son to love, nor to the rulers of men, who have no surer pledge of the fidelity of their subjects than religion. The punishments and rewards, which Christianity denounces or promises in another life, are consistent with reason and the nature of the soul. In literature the character appears more interesting, and the passions more energetic under the Christian dispensation, than they were under polytheism. The latter exhibited no dramatic part, no struggles between natural desires and virtue. Mythology contracted nature, and for this reason the ancients had no descriptive poetry; Christianity restores to the wilderness both its pictures and its solitudes. The Christian marvellous may sustain a comparison with the marvellous of fable: the ancients founded their poetry on Homer, and the Christians on the Bible; and the beauties of the Bible surpass the beauties of Homer. To Christianity the fine arts owe their revival and their perfection. In philosophy, it is not hostile to any natural truth. If it has sometimes oppos-

ed the sciences, it followed the spirit of the times and the opinions of the greatest legislators of antiquity. In history we should have been inferior to the ancients but for the new character of images, reflections, and thoughts, to which Christianity has given birth: modern eloquence furnishes the same observation. *To Christianity mankind is indebted for the worship of God; the more firm establishment of the doctrine of the existence of that Supreme Being, and the more thorough conviction of the immortality of the soul, and also of a future state of rewards and punishments; a more enlarged and active humanity; a whole and perfect virtue, and which alone is equivalent to all the others—Charity; a political law and the law of nations unknown to the ancients, and above all, the abolition of slavery.* Who is there but must be convinced of the beauty and the grandeur of Christianity? Who but must be overwhelmed with this stupendous mass of benefits?—*Chateaubriand's Beauties of Christianity*, iii. p. 249.

AS A SOURCE OF RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE.—You ask me “what is the shortest and surest way for a young gentleman to attain a true knowledge of the Christian religion, in the full and just extent of it?” For so I understand your question; if I have mistaken it, you must set me right. And to this I have a short and plain answer. Let him study the Holy Scriptures, especially the New Testament. Therein are contained the words of eternal life. It has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth without any mixture of error, for its matter. So that it is a wonder to me how any one professing Christianity, that would seriously set himself to know his religion, should be in doubt where to employ his search, and lay out his pains for his information; when he knows

a book, where it is all contained pure and entire, and whither at last every one must have recourse to verify that of it, which he finds any where else.—*Locke's Works*, ix. 306.

AS A CODE OF MORALITY.—As to “a treatise of morals,” I must own to you, that you are not the only person, who have been for putting me upon it; neither have I wholly laid by the thoughts of it. Nay, I so far incline to comply with your desires, that I every now and then, lay by some materials for it, as they occasionally occur, in the roving of my mind. But, when I consider that a book of offices, as you call it, ought not to be slightly done, especially by me, after what I have said of that science in my Essay; and that “*nonumque prematur in annum*,” is a rule more necessary to be observed in a subject of that consequence, than in any thing Horace speaks of; I am in doubt whether it would be prudent in one of my age and health, not to mention other disabilities in me, to set about it. Did the world want a rule, I confess there could be no work so necessary or so commendable. But the gospel contains so perfect a body of ethics, that reason may be excused from that inquiry, since she may find man's duty clearer and easier in revelation than in herself. Think not this the excuse of a lazy man, though it be perhaps of one who, having a sufficient rule for his actions, is content therewith; and thinks he may, perhaps with more profit to himself, employ the little time and strength he has in other researches, wherein he finds himself more in the dark.—*Locke's Works*, viii. 377.

The most distinct characteristic of Christianity is the spirit of charity and forbearance, which pervades all its precepts. The ancients, undoubtedly, respect-

ed the beneficent virtues ; but the precept, which commends the poor and the weak to the protection of the opulent, belongs essentially to our religion. With what care, with what love, the Christian legislator returns continually to the same sentiment and interest ! The tenderest pity lent to his words a persuasive unction ; but I admire, above all, the awful lesson he has given, in explaining the close union established between our sentiments towards the Supreme Being, and our duties towards men. Thus, after having termed the love of God, *the first commandment of the law*, the Evangelist adds: *and the second, which is like unto it, is to love thy neighbour as thyself*. The second, which is like unto it? what simplicity, what extent in that expression ! Can any thing be more interesting and sublime, than to offer continually to our mind the idea of a God, taking on himself the gratitude of the unfortunate ? Where find any principle of morality, of which the influence can ever equal such a grand thought ? The poor, the miserable, however abject their state, appear surrounded with the symbol of glory, when the love of humanity becomes an expression of the sentiments which elevate us to God ; and the mind ceases to be lost in the immensity of his perfections, when we hope to maintain an habitual intercourse with the Supreme Being, by the services which we render to men ; it is thus that a single thought spreads a new light on our duty, and gives to metaphysical ideas a substance conformable to our organs.—*Necker's Religious Opinions*, p. 417.

There are no persons so well instructed in the motives for a holy life, as the professors of Christianity. They are perfectly known even to persons of a common understanding ; and, in comparison of the certainty of their persuasion, the conjectures and reasonings of the ancient philosophers were alike shadows.

which were too transient and inefficacious to make any impressions. Every Christian can consult the oracles of revelation; and, by the favour of this divine light, can penetrate into these mysteries, which were unknown to the world before the coming of the Mediator sent by God. Amongst the most illiterate, those who are constantly occupied by manual labour in providing for their daily wants, we may nevertheless discover some sentiments of religion, not unmixed with zeal; and also a contentment both in life and in death, which is unknown to those, whose hearts are not illuminated by the light of the doctrine of Christ.—*Baron Haller's Letters to his Daughter*, let. 13.

Is it bigotry to believe the sublime truths of the gospel with full assurance of faith? I glory in such bigotry: I would not part with it for a thousand worlds; I congratulate the man who is possessed of it; for, amidst all the vicissitudes and calamities of the present state, that man enjoys an inexhaustible fund of consolation, of which it is not in the power of fortune to deprive him.

There is not a book on earth so favourable to all the kind, and all the sublime affections, or so unfriendly to hatred and persecution, to tyranny, injustice, and every sort of malevolence, as the gospel. It breathes nothing throughout but mercy, benevolence, and peace.

Poetry is sublime, when it awakens in the mind any great and good affection, as piety, or patriotism. This is one of the noblest effects of the heart. The Psalms are remarkable beyond all other writings, for their power of inspiring devout emotions. But it is not in this respect only that they are sublime; of the Divine nature they contain the most magnificent descriptions that the soul of man can comprehend. The

hundred and fourth psalm, in particular, displays the power and goodness of Providence, in creating and preserving the world, and the various tribes of animals in it, with such majestic brevity and beauty, as it is in vain to look for in any human composition.

Such of the doctrines of the gospel as are level to human capacity, appear to be agreeable to the purest truth and the soundest morality. All the genius and learning of the heathen world; all the penetration of Pythagoras, Socrates, and Aristotle, had never been able to produce such a system of moral duty, and so rational an account of providence and of man, as is to be found in the New Testament. Compared, indeed, to this, all other moral and theological wisdom

“Loses, discountenanced, and like folly shews.”

—*Beattie's Elements of Moral Science.*

This is the natural consequence of that purity of heart, which is so much insisted on in the Christian morality. In the instructions of the heathen philosophers, it is either not mentioned at all, or at most it is recommended coldly, as a thing proper and worthy of a mind attentive to great things. But, in Christianity, it is insisted on as an indispensable duty, and enforced by many arguments peculiar to itself.—*Robison's Proofs of a Conspiracy*, p. 267.

AUTHORITY OF CHRISTIAN PRECEPTS.—When a revelation hath all the authenticity of human testimony; when it appears consistent in all its parts; and when it contains nothing inconsistent with any real knowledge we have of the Supreme All-Perfect-Being, and of natural religion; such a revelation is to be received with the most profound reverence, with the most entire submission, and with the most un-

feigned thanksgiving. Reason has exercised her whole prerogative then, and delivers us over to faith. To believe before all these trials, or to doubt after them, is alike unreasonable. When persons have received the Christian revelation for genuine, after sufficient examination of its external and internal proofs, and have found nothing that makes it inconsistent with itself, nor that is repugnant to any of these divine truths, which reason and the works of God demonstrate to them; such persons will never set up reason in contradiction to it, on account of things plainly taught, but incomprehensible as to their manner of being. If they did, their reason would be false and deceitful; they would cease to be reasonable men.—*Bolingbroke's Works*, iv. 279.—v. 384, as quoted by *Leland*.

The authority of emperors, kings, and princes, is human. The authority of councils, synods, bishops, and presbyters is human. The authority of the prophets is divine, and comprehends the sum of religion, reckoning Moses and the apostles among the prophets; and “if an angel from heaven preach any other gospel than what they have preached, let him be accursed.” Their writings contain the covenant between God and his people, with instructions for keeping this covenant; instances of God’s judgments upon them that break it; and predictions of things to come. While the people of God keep the covenant, they continue to be his people; when they break it, they cease to be his people or church, and become “the synagogue of God who say they are Jews and are not.” And no power on earth is authorized to alter this covenant.—*Sir Isaac Newton on the Prophecies*, part i. 16.

SECTION V.

THE BENEFICIAL TENDENCY OF CHRISTIANITY.

WE may add, that if, in the commencement of the Christian dispensation, the religion had been maintained on the principles of its founder, the states and republics of Christendom, would be more united and more happy than they are.—*Machiavel's Prince*, p. xx. Introd.

Avoid those who, under the pretence of explaining nature, sow mischievous doctrines in the hearts of men, and whose apparent scepticism is a hundred times as positive and dogmatic, as the decisive tone of their adversaries. Under the arrogant pretext, that they alone are enlightened, true, and sincere, they imperiously subject us to their peremptory decisions; and presume to give us, as the general principles of things, the unintelligible systems, which they have erected in their imaginations. Overthrowing, destroying, trampling under foot all that is respected by men, they bereave the afflicted of the last consolation in their misery; they take from the rich and the powerful, the only curb of their passions; they eradicate from the heart the remorse consequent on guilt, the hopes inspired by virtue; and still they boast of being the benefactors of the human race. Never, say they, can truth be hurtful to man. I think so too; and this in my opinion is a strong proof that what they teach is not the truth.

One of the sophisms most familiar to the philosophic party, is to contrast a supposed nation of good

philosophers with one of bad Christians ; as if it were easier to form a nation of genuine philosophers, than a nation of genuine Christians. I know not, if, among individuals, one of these characters is more easy to be found than the other ; but this I know, that, when we come to talk of nations, we must suppose that there are such as will make a bad use of philosophy without religion, just as ours abuses religion without philosophy ; and this seems to me to make a material alteration in the state of the question. It is an easy matter to make a parade with fine maxims in books ; but the question is, whether they agree with sound reason, and necessarily flow from it. And this has not hitherto appeared to be the case with those of which we are speaking. It remains also to be ascertained, whether philosophy, at its ease, and upon the throne, would be capable of controlling the love of glory, the selfishness, the ambition, the little passions of men ; and whether it would practise that engaging humanity, which, with pen in hand, it so highly commends.

By principles philosophy can do no good, which religion would not far surpass ; and religion performs much, that philosophy cannot accomplish.—*Rousseau's Emilius*, ii. 228.

Modern governments are undoubtedly indebted to Christianity for their most solid authority, and the rarity of revolutions. It has even rendered them less sanguinary ; this is proved by comparing them with the ancient governments. Religion better understood, hath, by banishing fanaticism, given a greater mildness to Christian manners. This alteration is not the effect of letters, for we do not find that wherever literature hath flourished, humanity hath been at all the more respected. The cruelty of the Athenians, of the Egyptians, of the Roman emperors, and the

Chinese, are evidences of this. On the other hand, what deeds of mercy and charity have been effected by the gospel! How many restitutions and reparations hath the practice of confession brought about among the catholics! Among us, how many reconciliations are effected, how many alms are distributed before an approaching communion?—*Rousseau's Emilius*, ii. 228. Note.

No religion ever appeared in the world, whose natural tendency was so much directed to promote the peace and happiness of mankind, as Christianity. No system can be more simple and plain, than that of natural religion as it stands in the gospel. Besides natural religion, there are two other parts, into which Christianity may be analyzed, duties superadded to those of the former, and articles of belief, that reason neither could discover nor can comprehend. Both the duties required to be practised, and the propositions required to be believed, are concisely and plainly enough expressed in the original gospel, properly so called, which Christ taught, and which his four evangelists recorded. No institutions can be imagined more simple, nor void of all those pompous rites, and theatrical representations, that abounded in the religious worship of the heathens and Jews, than these two were in their origin, (that is, the Christian sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper.) They were not only innocent but profitable ceremonies, because they were extremely proper to keep up the spirit of true religion, by keeping up that of Christianity, and to promote the observance of moral duties, by maintaining a respect for the revelation, which confirmed them. I will not say, that the belief that Jesus was the Messiah, is the only article of belief necessary to make men Christians. There are other things doubtless contained in the revelation he made of himself,

dependent on, and relative to, this article, without the belief of which, I suppose our Christianity would be very defective. But this I say, that the system of religion, which Christ published, and his evangelists recorded, is a complete system to all the purposes of religion, natural and revealed. Christianity, as it stands in the gospel, contains not only a complete, but a very plain system of religion. Supposing Christianity to have been a human invention, it has been the most amiable and the most useful invention, that was ever imposed on mankind for their good. Christianity, as it came out of the hands of God, if I may use the expression, was a most simple and intelligible rule of belief, worship, and manners, which is the true notion of a religion. As soon as men presumed to add any thing of their own to it, the human alloy corrupted the divine mass, and it became an object of vain, intricate, and contentious science. The gospel is, in all cases, one continued lesson of the strictest morality, of justice, of benevolence, of universal charity. The theology contained in the gospel lies in a narrow compass. It is marvellous indeed, but it is plain, and it is employed throughout to enforce natural religion. The charge, which the enemies of religion bring against Christianity on this account (that is, of persecution for opinions) is unjustly brought. These effects have not been caused by the gospel, but by the system raised upon it; not by the revelations of God, but by the inventions of men. The Christian system of faith and practice was revealed by God himself; and it is absurd and impious to assert that the divine *Logos* revealed it incompletely or imperfectly. Its simplicity and plainness shewed, that it was designed to be the religion of mankind, and manifested likewise the divinity of its original.

—*Bolingbroke's Works*, iv. 281. 290. 294. 301.

314. 316. 394. 349. iii. 451, as quoted by Leland.

Jesus Christ may, therefore, with strict truth, be denominated, in a material sense, that SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD, which he is in a spiritual sense. His appearance upon earth was, humanly speaking, the most important event that ever occurred among men, since it was by the gospel dispensation that the face of the whole world began to be entirely changed.—The gospel has changed mankind in every point, and enabled them to take an immense step towards perfection. Consider it as a grand religious cause, which has regenerated the human race; then all petty objections, all the cavils of impiety fall to the ground. Christianity is the religion, that is adapted to a nation matured by time; it is, if we may venture to use the expression, the religion congenial to the present age of the world, as the reign of types and emblems was suited to the cradle of Israel.

With respect to the *morality* of the gospel, its beauty is universally admired. The more it is known and practised, the more the eyes of men will be opened to their real happiness and their true interest. The science of politics is extremely circumscribed: the highest degree of perfection, which it is capable of attaining, is the representative system, the offspring, as we have shewn, of Christianity. But a *religion*, which is at the same time a *moral code*, is an institution, which is incessantly furnishing new resources, which provides for every contingency, and which, in the hands of saints and sages, is an universal instrument of felicity.—*Chateaubriand's Beauties of Christianity*, iii. 270.

In this state of darkness and error, in reference to the "true God," our Saviour found the world. But the clear revelation he brought with him, dissipated

this darkness; made the "one invisible true God" known to the world: and that with such evidence and energy, that polytheism and idolatry have nowhere been able to withstand it: but wherever the preaching of the truth he delivered, and the light of the gospel, hath come, those mists have been dispelled. And, in effect, we see, that, since our Saviour's time, the "belief of one God," has prevailed and spread itself over the face of the earth. For even to the light that the Messiah brought into the world with him, we must ascribe the owning and profession of one God, which the Mahometan religion hath devised and borrowed from it. So that in this sense it is certainly and manifestly true of our Saviour, what St. John says of him, 1 John iii. 8. "For this purpose "the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." This light the world needed, and this light is received from him: that there is but "one God," and he "eternal, invisible;" not like to any visible objects, nor to be represented by them.—*Locke on the Reasonableness of Christianity, Works, vi. 137.*

THE INEXCUSABLENESS OF REJECTING CHRISTIANITY.
 —The evidence for the Christian religion seems to be so clear and strong in all Christian countries, and that with respect to all ranks and conditions of men, that no person, who is previously qualified by benevolence, piety, and the moral sense, can refuse his assent to it. This I take to be a plain matter of observation, supported by the universal testimony of those persons that attend to it; meaning by the Christian religion, the belief of the divine mission of Moses and the prophets, of Christ and his apostles, or the truth of the scriptures. Whoever, therefore, conducts himself by the foregoing rule, (of benevolence, piety,

and the moral sense,) must believe revealed religion, as well as natural, if born in a Christian country. All unbelievers, where there is so much evidence, I had almost said, all doubters, seem to be culpable in a very high degree.

If any unbeliever thinks this censure too severe, let him examine his own heart. Is he previously qualified, by love to God, and to all the world, by a sincere regard for, and observance of natural religion? Is he chaste, temperate, meek, humble, just, and charitable? Does he delight in God, in contemplating his providence, praying to him, and praising him? Does he believe a future state, and expect it with hope and comfort? Is he not so fond of the praise of men, or so fearful of censure and ridicule, as to be ashamed to own Christ? If the Christian religion be true, it must be of great importance, and if of great importance, it is a duty of natural religion to inquire into it. The obligation, therefore, to examine seriously, subsists, in some degree, as long as there is any evidence for, or doubt of the truth of revelation. For, if true, it must be of importance, whether we see that importance or not. He, who determines that it is of no importance, determines at once that it is false. But it is too evident to all impartial observers, that those who disbelieve, or affect to disbelieve, have not made a serious, accurate inquiry; such a one as they would make about a worldly concern of moment; but content themselves, and endeavour to perplex others, with general objections, mixed, for the most part, with ridicule and raillery, things that are manifest hindrances in the search after truth.—*Hartley's Observations on Man*, ii. 347—349.

SECTION VI.

PERSONAL TESTIMONIES TO THE TRUTH AND EXCELLENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

The more I learn Christianity from Scripture, the more I grow convinced how unjust those objections are, with which it is charged. I find for instance, that all that Voltaire says of the intolerance of Christians, and of bloodshedding caused by Christianity, is a very unjust charge laid upon religion. It is easy to be seen, that those cruelties, said to be caused by religion, if properly considered, were the production of human passions, selfishness, and ambition, and that religion served in such cases only for a cloak. I am fully convinced of the truth of the Christian religion, and I feel its power in quieting my conscience, and informing my sentiments. I have examined it during a good state of health, and with all the reason I am master of. I tried every argument, I felt no fear, I have taken my own time, and I have not been in haste. I own with joy, I find Christianity the more amiable, the more I get acquainted with it. I never knew it before. I believed it contradicted reason and the nature of man, whose religion it was designed to be. I thought it an artfully contrived and ambiguous doctrine, full of incomprehensibilities. Whenever I formerly thought on religion in some serious moments, I had always an idea in my mind, how it ought to be; which was, it should be simple and accommodated to the abilities of men in every condition. I now find Christianity to be exactly so: it answers entirely that idea, which I had formed of true reli-

gion. Had I but formerly known it was such, I should not have delayed turning Christian till this time of my imprisonment. But I had the misfortune to be prejudiced against religion, first through my own passions, and afterwards likewise by so many human inventions, foisted into it, of which I could see plainly that they had no foundation, though they were styled essential parts of Christianity.—*Count Struensee, quoted in Simpson's Plea for Religion.*

After all my troubles and toilings in the world, said Oxenstiern, Chancellor of Sweden, I find that my private life in the country has afforded me more contentment, than I ever met with in all my public employment. I have lately applied myself to the study of the Bible, wherein all wisdom, and the greatest delights are to be found. I therefore counsel you (the English Ambassadors) to make the study and practice of the word of God your chief contentment and delight; as indeed it will be to every soul, who savours the truths of God, which infinitely excel all worldly things.—*Chancellor Oxenstiern, quoted in Simpson's Plea for Religion.*

I will not say that the truth of Christianity has been *demonstrated* *; this term, though adopted and repeated by the best apologists, would, I conceive, be somewhat too strong. But I have no hesitation in saying plainly and explicitly, that the facts, which establish the truth of Christianity, carry with them, to my apprehension, so exceedingly high a degree of probability, that were I to reject them I should do violence to the clearest principles and rules of sound logic, and even to the most obvious dictates of reason and of common sense.

* The author states that he uses this word in its most literal sense, as implying *mathematical certainty*.

I have endeavoured to explore the inmost recesses of my heart, and, having discovered no secret motive there, which should induce me to reject a religion so well calculated to supply the defects of my reason, to comfort me under affliction, and to advance the perfection of my nature, I receive this religion as the greatest blessing, that Heaven in its goodness could confer upon mankind. And I should still receive it with gratitude, were I to consider it only as the very best and most perfect system of practical philosophy.—*Bonnet's Enquiries concerning Christianity*, 297.

For my own part, gentlemen, I have been ever deeply devoted to the truths of Christianity: and my firm belief in the Holy Gospel is by no means owing to the prejudices of education (though I was religiously educated by the best of parents) but has arisen from the fullest and most continued reflections of my riper years and understanding. It forms at this moment the great consolation of a life, which, as a shadow passes away: and without it, I should consider my long course of health and prosperity (too long perhaps, and too uninterrupted to be good for any man) only as the dust which the wind scatters, and rather as a snare than as a blessing.—*Lord Erskine's Speeches*, ii. 188.

CHAPTER VIII.

TESTIMONIES TO THE GENERAL DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY.

SECTION I.

THE INSUFFICIENCY OF REASON IN DECIDING ON THE TRUTHS OF REVELATION.

LIMITED POWER OF THE HUMAN UNDERSTANDING.

—One of the most valuable effects of genuine philosophy, is to remind us of the limited powers of the human understanding; and to revive those natural feelings of wonder and admiration, at the spectacle of the universe, which are apt to languish, in consequence of long familiarity. The most profound discoveries which are placed within the reach of our researches, instead of laying open to our view the efficient causes of natural appearances, lead to a confession of human ignorance; for, while they flatter the pride of man, and increase his power, by enabling him to trace the simple and beautiful laws by which physical events are regulated, they call his attention, at the same time, to those general and ultimate facts, which bound the narrow circle of his knowledge; and which, by evincing to him the operation of powers, whose nature must for ever remain unknown, serve to remind him of the insufficiency of his faculties to penetrate the secrets

of the universe. Wherever we direct our inquiries ; whether to the anatomy and physiology of animals, to the growth of vegetables, to the chemical attractions and repulsions, or to the motions of the heavenly bodies, we perpetually perceive the effects of powers, which do not belong to matter. To a certain length we are able to proceed ; but in every research, we meet with a line, which no industry nor ingenuity can pass. It is a line too, which is marked with sufficient distinctness ; and which no man now thinks of passing, who has just views of the nature and object of philosophy. It forms the separation between that field, which falls under the survey of the physical inquirer, and that unknown region, of which, though it was necessary that we should be assured of the existence, in order to lay a foundation for the doctrines of natural theology, it hath not pleased the author of the universe to reveal to us the wonders, in this infant state of our being.—*Stewart's Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, i. 88.

THE USE OF REASON IN REGARD TO REVELATION.
 —One use of reason in things, which by the testimony of men are supposed to come from God, is to endeavour to find out such a sense of a supposed divine revelation, as is agreeable to the discoveries of our reason, if the words under any kind of construction will bear it, though at first view they may seem repugnant to reason and to one another. This is certainly a great piece of justice, and what is due to words, that, upon the least evidence can be supposed to come from God ; especially since expressions, that do not literally quadrate with the maxims of reason and philosophy, are necessary to make a revelation have any effect upon common people's minds. For, was not God to be represented by expressions, which, literally understood,

attribute to him human passions and actions; they who, by their occupations in the world, are incapable of those more just ideas, which men of thought know to belong to that being, would perhaps think him incapable of taking cognizance of their actions. And, therefore, to make a revelation *useful and credible in itself*, it must consist of words, whose *literal* meaning is false, but whose real meaning is consistent with the justest notions of reason and philosophy. And therefore, we ought to examine whether the words, under any construction, will bear a reasonable sense*. *Collins's Essay concerning the use of Reason, &c. as quoted by Leland.*

Divine philosophy, or natural theology, is that knowledge, or rudiment of knowledge concerning God, which may be obtained by the contemplation of his creatures; which knowledge may be truly termed divine, in respect of the object; and natural in respect of the light. The bounds of this knowledge are, that it suffices to convince atheism, but not to inform religion; and, therefore, there was never miracle wrought by God to convert an atheist, because the light of nature might have led him to confess a God; but miracles have been wrought to convert idolaters and the superstitious, because no light of nature extends to declare the will and true worship of God. For as all works do shew forth the power and skill of the workman, and not his image, so it is of the works which show the omnipotence and wisdom of the maker, but not his image; and, therefore, therein the heathen opinion differs from the sacred truth, for they supposed the world to be the image of God, and man to be an extract or compendious image of the world; but

* This observation is applied by the author to those passages of Scripture, where God is said to *rest, repent, be angry, &c.*

the Scriptures never vouchsafe to attribute to the world that honour, as to be the image of God, but only the work of his hands ; neither do they speak of any other image of God, but man : wherefore, by the contemplation of nature, to induce and enforce the acknowledgement of God, and to demonstrate his power, providence, and goodness, is an excellent argument, and has been well handled by many. But, on the other side, out of the contemplation of nature, or ground of human knowledge, to induce any verity or persuasion concerning the point of faith, is, in my judgment, not safe : *Da fidei quæ fidei sunt*, for, the heathens themselves conclude as much, in that excellent and divine fable of the golden chain :—“ That men
 “ and gods were not able to draw *Jupiter* down to the
 “ earth ; but, on the contrary, *Jupiter* was able to
 “ draw them up to heaven.” So as we ought not to attempt to draw down or submit the mysteries of God to our reason ; but, on the contrary, to raise and advance our reason to the divine truth ; so as in this part of knowledge touching divine philosophy, I am so far from noting deficiency, that I rather note an excess ; whereunto I have digressed, because of the extreme prejudice which both religion and philosophy have received, and may receive, by being commixed together ; as that undoubtedly will make an heretical religion, and an imaginary and fabulous philosophy.—*Bacon's Essays.*

The use of human reason, in matters pertaining to religion, is of two sorts : the one, in the conception and apprehension of the mysteries of God revealed to us ; the other, in the inferring and deriving of doctrine and direction from them. As to the conception of the mysteries, we see God vouchsafes to descend to the weakness of our capacity, so expressing and unfolding his mysteries, as they may best be

comprehended by us ; and grafting, in a manner, his revelations, and holy doctrine, upon the conceptions and notions of our reason ; and so applying his inspirations to open our understanding, as the form of the key is fitted to the ward of the lock. In which respect, notwithstanding, we ought not to be wanting to ourselves ; for since God himself makes use of the means of our reason in his illuminations, we ought also to exercise and turn the same every way, by which we may become more capable to receive and imbibe the holy mysteries ; with this caution, that the mind be dilated, according to its model, to the amplitude of the mysteries ; and not the mysteries straitened and contracted to the narrowness of the mind. As for inferences, we ought to know, that there is allowed us a use of reason and argumentation in mysteries secondary and respective, though not original and absolute ; for after the articles and principles of religion are once placed, and wholly exempted from the examination of reason, it is then permitted unto us to make deductions and inferences from them, and according to the analogy of them, for our better direction. In things natural, indeed, this holds not ; for both the principles themselves are examinable by induction, though not by syllogism : and, besides, those principles, or first positions have no repugnancy with that reason which draws down and deduces the inferior positions. The case is otherwise in religion, where both the first positions are their own supporters, and subsist by themselves ; and again, they are not regulated by that reason which deduces the consequent propositions. Nor does this hold in religion alone, but in other sciences also, both of greater and smaller nature ; namely, wherein there are not only positions, but acts of authority ; for in such also there can be no use of absolute reason : so in human laws, there

are many grounds and maxims, which are *placita juris* positive upon authority and not upon reason; and therefore not to be disputed; but what is most just, not absolutely but relatively, and according to the analogy of those maxims, which affords a large field of disputation. Such, therefore, is that secondary reason that has place in divinity, which is grounded upon the placits of God.

And as there is a double use of human reason in divine matters, so in the same use also there is a double excess: the one, when too curious an inquiry is made into the manner of the mystery; the other, when as great authority is attributed to inferences as to principles. We have an instance of the first in *Nicodemus*, who obstinately inquires, "how can a man be born when he is old?" Of the second, in those who arrogantly vouch their opinions by anathemas: it would therefore be a wholesome and very useful course, if a sober and diligent treatise was compiled, which might give directions concerning the true limits and use of reason in spiritual things; and would be a kind of opiate medicine, not only to quiet and lay asleep the vanity of curious speculations with which the schools labour, but likewise to calm and mitigate the fury of controversies, wherewith the church labours. For it cannot but open men's eyes to see, that many controversies do merely relate to that which is either not revealed or positive; and that many others do grow upon weak and obscure inferences or deductions. So it is a thing of great moment and use, well to define what, and of what latitude those points are, which disincorporate men from the body of the church, and exclude them from the communion and fellowship of the faithful. Now, if any one thinks this has been done long ago, let him well consider with what sincerity and moderation.

In the mean time, it is likely that he who makes mention of peace, will receive *Jehu's* answer to the messenger, "Is it peace, *Jehu*?" "What hast thou to do with peace? Turn, and follow me." Peace is not the thing that most people love, but party.—*Bacon's Essays*, p. 336.

But there being many things, wherein we have very imperfect notions, or none at all; and other things, of whose past, present, or future existence, by the natural use of our faculties, we can have no knowledge at all; these, as being beyond the discovery of our natural faculties, and above reason, are, when revealed, the proper matter of faith. Thus, that part of the angels rebelled against God, and thereby lost their first happy state; and that the dead shall rise, and live again: these, and the like, being beyond the discovery of reason, are purely matters of faith; with which reason has nothing to do.—*Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding*, book iv. chap. 18.

But, finding in myself nothing to be truer than what the wise Solomon tells me: *As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit; nor how the bones grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God, who makest all things: I gratefully receive and rejoice in the light of revelation, which sets me at rest in many things, the manner whereof my poor reason can by no means make out to me: omnipotency, I know, can do any thing that contains in it no contradiction; so that I readily believe whatever God has declared, though my reason find difficulties in it, which it cannot master.*—*Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding*, book iv. chap. 3.

SECTION II.

FAITH IN THE DOCTRINES OF REVELATION.

BELIEF IN TESTIMONY.—Superstition *, under the guidance of philosophy, is natural, and is good. It is impossible for mankind, in general, to see those truths of science, which require the investigation of many steps ; for, mankind must not consist of theoretical philosophers, no more than of kings and judges. But though mankind cannot see those truths, which are above the degree of their proper science, they may believe them when revealed. For example, the system of the heavenly bodies is here generally believed by those, who read or converse with men of science, although there are but few of those, who see the evidence of that truth which they then believe : and there is nothing so incredible but what will be believed, if coming from an authority that is not suspected, and if not opposed by the prejudices of the person, whose faith is thus to be formed in superstition and not in science.—*Hutton's Investigation*, iii. 626.

FAITH ATTAINED BY PRAYER.—As reason is a rebel unto faith, so passion unto reason. As the propositions of faith seem absurd unto reason, so the theorems of reason unto passion, and both unto reason ; yet a moderate and peaceable discretion may so state and order the matter, that they may be all kings, and yet make but one monarchy, every one exercising his prerogative in a due time and place, according to the

* By superstition this author means belief on the authority of others.

restraint and limit of circumstance. There is, as in philosophy, so in divinity, sturdy doubts and boisterous objections, wherewith the unhappiness of our knowledge too easily acquainteth us. More of these no man hath known than myself, which I confess I conquered, not in a martial posture, but on my knees.—*Brown's Religio Medici.*

NATURE OF FAITH.—As touching the act itself (of faith) it is no other than a sound, real, and firm belief of those sacred truths. Therefore, it seems that they that perplex the notion of faith with other intricate and abstruse definitions or descriptions, either render it very difficult or scarce intelligible, or else take into the definition, or but description of it, those things that are but the consequents and effects of it. He that hath this firm persuasion will most certainly repent of his past sins, will most certainly endeavour obedience to the will of God, which is thus believed by him to be holy, just, and good; and upon the obedience or disobedience whereof depends his eternal happiness or misery; will most certainly depend upon the promises of God for this life and that to come; for those are as natural effects of such a firm persuasion, as it is for the belief of a danger to put a man upon means to avoid it, or for the belief of a benefit to put a man upon means to attain it. Some things are of such a nature, that the belief or knowledge of them goes no farther, but it rests in itself, as the belief of bare speculative truths; but some things are of such a nature, as being once truly and firmly believed or known, carry a man out to action; and such are especially the knowledge and belief of such things, as are the objects of our fears or of our hopes. The belief of objects doth naturally, and with a kind of moral necessity, carry a man out to action, to the avoid-

ing of such fears and the attaining of such hopes; and, therefore, faith and belief, in reference thereunto, comes often in the Scripture under the names of hope and fear, as being the proper effects of it, 2 Cor. v. 10, 11.—1 John, iii. 2, 3.

Faith, therefore, is a firm assent to the sacred truths, whether the truths relate to things past, as that God made the world, that Christ the Messiah is come in the flesh, &c.; or to things present, as that Almighty God beholds all I do, and knows all I think, or that he is a reconciled father to me in Christ Jesus; or things to come, which principally excite those two great movers of the soul, hope and fear, in relation to the future life of rewards and punishments.—*Sir Matthew Hale's Contemplations*, i. 262.

EXCELLENCE OF FAITH.—Faith, in this sense, is the Christian virtue, next in excellency to love; and, as love makes the pleasure and glory of God the last end, so faith gives the resolution for pursuing all the means towards that end, and towards the next subordinate end, the tranquillity of the mind, trusting in God for direction in all the means towards these ends; that, as the natural man trusts to, and rests on, natural means for obtaining his ends, so the spiritual trusts to, and depends upon, the conduct of the Holy Ghost, by supernatural means especially. Therefore the Apostle Paul saith, and gives warrant to all, who walk Christianly, to say, “The life that I now live is by the faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”—*Dalrymple, Earl of Stair, on the Divine Perfections*, 321.

This faith in the promises of God, this relying and acquiescing in his word and faithfulness, the Almighty takes well at our hand, as a great mark of homage, paid by us frail creatures, to his goodness and truth,

as well as to his power and wisdom; and accepts it as an acknowledgment of his peculiar providence and benignity to us. And, therefore, our Saviour tells us, John xii. 44, "He that believes on me, believes not on me, but on him that sent me." The works of nature show his wisdom and power; but it is his peculiar care of mankind, most eminently discovered in his promises to them, that shows his bounty and goodness; and consequently engages their hearts in love and affection to him. This oblation of an heart, fixed with dependence on, and affection to him, is the most acceptable tribute we can pay him, the foundation of true devotion, and life of all religion. What a value he puts on this depending on his word, and resting satisfied in his promises, we have an example in Abraham, whose faith "was counted to him for righteousness," as we have before remarked out of Romans iv. And his relying firmly on the promise of God, without any doubt of its performance, gave him the name of the Father of the Faithful; and gained him so much favour with the Almighty, that he was called the "friend of God;" the highest and most glorious title that can be bestowed on a creature.—*Locke on the Reasonableness of Christianity, Works, vi. 129.*

DIFFERENT DEGREES OF FAITH.—I believe there is no degree of faith necessary to salvation, which is not suitable to the evidence, if men, through laziness, prejudices, vice, passions, interest, or some other defect, are not wanting to themselves. Nor is the same degree of faith necessary to all persons, since men's capacities, education, and their opportunities of informing themselves, may dispose them to be diffident and apt to hesitate. And, in some cases, a degree of faith, not exempt from doubts, may, through God's

goodness, be accepted; and even the apostles made it their prayer that our Saviour would "increase their faith." And he who solicited him to help his son, cried out, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief;" and was so mercifully accepted by that high priest, who is sensibly touched with our infirmities, that his request was granted, though it could not be done without a miracle. And our Saviour's disciples, when they were ready to perish, and were saved by their master, he, at the same time, gave them the epithet of "men of little faith." The faith, then, that is as necessary under the gospel, as the genuine fruit of it is obedience, so it is not such a faith as excludes doubts, but refusals. Indeed, the attainment of a higher degree of faith is always a blessing, and cannot be too much prized or aimed at; but there are degrees in some kind of virtues and graces, that, though it be a happiness to reach them, yet the endeavouring after them is an indispensable duty.—*Hon. Robert Boyle's Theological Works.*

CONNEXION OF FAITH WITH SALVATION.—God was inclined to save mankind, not from the righteousness of man himself, or from any merit of his own, but only through the redemption which is in Christ. It is by faith that he is justified, not by the accomplishment of the law. This is the invariable doctrine of revelation, as preached both by St. Paul, and by our Saviour himself. "Without me, ye can do nothing." "This is life eternal, that they believe in him whom God hath sent." Man, justified by the grace which is in another, hath no cause for pride or vanity.—*Baron Haller's Letters to his Daughter, Letter 13.*

The saving act of faith is not ordained to be man's part of the covenant of grace, upon consideration of its own worth and value, but as it relates to, and re-

lieth on, the mercy and faithfulness of God, and the merits and satisfaction of Christ. It useth to be called the eye of faith looking to these, the hand of faith laying hold upon them, or the instrument of the soul, whereby it obtains salvation. There are sharp disputes, under which of these considerations it justifies; but I like it better to be conceived only as the manner which God hath freely chosen, whereby to communicate grace and glory to the elect. I like it not properly to be called an instrument, which is an inferior cause, having some influence with the principal agent, whereas God and Christ are the only cause of grace and glory. Neither yet to be properly a condition, upon which God is to give grace and glory, seeing a condition must be uncertain to him who makes it a condition. The being an eye or hand are certainly metaphorical; without doubt, *causa conditio et modus* are different. There is least to be attributed to the saving act of faith, as it is only the manner how God is pleased to save, which is not a necessary manner, for God might have exerted all his dispensations with creatures, without giving them the honour to enter into covenant with him, and, therefore, he freely chose the way of a covenant, and so the manner of it; and, to magnify his grace, and to exclude all glorying of man in himself, he hath chosen the manner of the covenant of grace, wherein there could not be less of man in a covenant. If God had proceeded only by mercy to save men, there could have been no place for a covenant, and man had not been so much dealt with as a rational creature, proceeding by reason, deliberation, and choice, as by a covenant.

—*Dalrymple, Earl of Stair, on the Divine Perfections.*

FAITH PRODUCTIVE OF GOOD WORKS.—'Twas an unhappy division, that has been made between faith.

and works. Though in my intellect, I may divide them, just as in the candle I know there is both light and heat; but yet put out the candle, and they are both gone; one remains not without the other; so 'tis betwixt faith and works. Nay, in a right conception "*fides est opus*;" if I believe a thing, because I am commanded, that is "*opus*."—*Selden's Table Talk*, p. 61.

But here I would have it observed, that though faith be the grand condition of God's grant of eternal life, I would not ascribe any thing to a barren lazy faith, in opposition to that active one called "faith operating by love;" since, according to St. James, faith and works are as necessary to devotion as a union of soul and body is to life. But though true faith (which, like Rachel) cries "give me children, or else I die," produces good works; yet those works are not the cause, but the effect of God's first love to men. "Thou art good, and doest good," says the Psalmist, it being the greatness of his goodness that makes it ours; he not doing good to us, because we are, but because he is good himself; for, as he is necessarily kind, he is not the less obligingly so to us; and, though some kind of communicativeness be essential to his goodness, yet his extension of it to us is arbitrary.—*Honourable Robert Boyle's Theological Works*.

Lest the best of men, in considering the number and greatness of their sins, and comparing them with the purity of the Scripture precepts, and the perfection of God, should not dare to look up to him with a filial trust and confidence in him; lest their hearts should fail, Christ our Saviour is sent from heaven, God manifest in the flesh, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life; that though our sins be as scarlet, they should by him, by means of his sufferings, and our faith, be made as

white as wool ; and the great punishment which must otherwise have been inflicted upon us, according to what we call the course of nature, be averted. Faith then in Christ the righteous, will supply the place of that righteousness, and sinless perfection, to which we cannot attain.

And yet this faith does not make void the law, and strict conditions above described ; but, on the contrary, establishes them. For no man can have this faith in Christ, but he who complies with the conditions. To have a sense of our sins, to be humble and contrite, and in this state of mind to depend upon Christ as the mediator between God and man, as able and willing to save us, which is true faith, argues such a disposition as will shew itself in works. And, if our faith falls short of this, if it does not overcome the world, and shew itself by works, it is of no avail ; it is like that of the devils, *who believe and tremble*. Men must labour, therefore, after this faith as much as after any other Christian grace, or rather as much as after all the others, else they cannot obtain it. For it contains all the other Christian graces ; and we can never know that we have it, but by our having the Christian graces which are its fruits.—*Hartley's Observations on Man*, ii. 408.

SECTION III.

THE MYSTERIES WHICH FAITH RECEIVES.

CHRISTIAN MYSTERIES.—It has been objected to the gospel, that it contains many things which are

hard to be conceived ; and some which seem contrary to reason. And it is undoubtedly attended with some difficulties, otherwise there would have been no occasion for teachers and interpreters. But, though there may be some things above reason, yet there will never be found any which are contrary ; and even the difficulties, upon a due examination of the context, often vanish, and shew that the fault is not in the doctrine, but in our want of apprehension. Many articles, in what we style natural religion, are equally difficult to be explained. For instance, we often see vice triumphant and virtue depressed, for which we cannot account from any light of nature, nor from the religion supposed to be founded on it, as that system can afford neither reason nor remedy, both which are to be obtained from revelation. The like occurs in natural philosophy. We find it abound with phenomena, which we see and know, but cannot explain ; for instance, gravity, magnetism, and electricity. If then we meet with many things in common life, and worldly science, which seem difficult to comprehend, and some beyond our reason ; we must expect to find others above our reason in that grand system of life and immortality, which Providence has laid before us. And it is our duty to acquiesce, and to trust to the word of God, which cannot deceive.—*Bryant on the Authenticity of Scripture.*

What grounds, therefore, have I to be astonished at the obscurities, in which certain doctrines of religion are involved ? Is not this obscurity itself greatly increased by that darkness, which envelopes so many of the mysteries of nature ? How unphilosophical would it be, were I to complain, that God has not bestowed on me the eyes and intelligence of an angel, that I might penetrate into all the secrets of nature and of grace ? Have I the presumption to think, that,

in order to satisfy an idle curiosity, God ought to have disturbed the universal harmony of nature, and placed me one step higher in the immense scale of beings? Is not my extent of knowledge sufficient to guide me safely in the path, which is traced out for me? Have I not sufficient motives to pursue it steadily, and sufficient hopes to animate my efforts, and to excite me in the pursuit of my proper end? Even natural religion itself, that religion which I believe to be the result, and which I consider as the glory of my reason, that very system which seems to me so harmonious, so connected in all its parts, so perfectly philosophical; with how many impenetrable mysteries does it abound! The sole idea of a necessarily-existent being, of a being existing by itself, how unfathomable is such a thought, even to an archangel! Nay, even without reverting so far back as that first great Being which absorbs all comprehension, the soul itself, that soul which natural religion soothes with the hopes of immortality, how many insuperable difficulties does it present to me?—*Bonnet's Enquiries concerning Christianity*, 289.

In favour of those, who believe those abstruse articles revealed in Scripture, on the account of divine revelation, we shall add, that it appears from the contradictory opinions of the divisibility of quantity, some doctrine must be true, though attended with difficulties, above the reach of our reason; and since God's perfect knowledge can distinguish which of those opinions is true, and can declare that to men, it would be a precarious ground to reject a revealed article, because attended with difficulties and liable to objections. And that a truth may be assented to, upon positive evidence, as important to religion in general, and the Christian in particular, though witty and ingenious men may make objections not easily answer-

ed, may appear from the following instance: And first, by our walking and moving from place to place, we are convinced that there is local motion; though Zeno and his followers urged arguments against it, which puzzled and nonplussed the ancient philosophers, as well as those moderns, that have pretended to give clear solutions of them.—*Honourable Robert Boyle's Theological Works.*

Nor do they, who reject the Christian religion because of the difficulties which arise in its mysteries, consider how far that objection will go against other systems both of religion and of philosophy, which they themselves profess to admit. There are in deism itself, the most simple of all religious opinions, several difficulties, for which human reason can but ill account; which may therefore be not improperly styled *articles of faith*. Such is the origin of evil, under the government of an all-good and all-powerful God; a question so hard that the inability of solving it in a manner satisfactory to their apprehensions has driven some of the greatest philosophers into the monstrous and senseless opinions of manicheism and atheism. Such is the reconciling the prescience of God with the free-will of man, which, after much thought on the subject, Mr. Locke fairly confesses he could not do, though he acknowledged both; and what Mr. Locke could not do, in reasoning upon subjects of a metaphysical nature, I am apt to think few men, if any, can hope to perform. Such is also the creation of the world at any supposed time, or *the eternal production of it* from God; it being almost equally hard, according to mere philosophical notions, either to admit that the goodness of God could remain unexercised through all eternity, before the time of such a creation, let it be set back ever so far, or to conceive an *eternal production*, which words so applied, are

inconsistent and contradictory terms ; the solutio commonly given, by a comparison to the emanation of light from the sun, not being adequate to it or just, and naturally emanating from it ; whereas, matter is not a quality inherent or emanating from the divine essence, but of a different substance and nature, and if not independent and self-existing, must have been created by a mere act of the divine will ; and if created, then not eternal, the idea of creation implying a time when the substance created did not exist. But because of these difficulties, or any other, that may occur in the system of Deism, no wise man will deny the being of a God, or his infinite wisdom, goodness, and power, which are proved by such evidence as carries the clearest and strongest conviction, and cannot be refuted without involving the mind in far greater difficulties, even in downright absurdities and impossibilities. The only part, therefore, that can be taken, is to account in the best manner, that our weak reason is able to do, for such seeming objections ; and, where that fails, to acknowledge its weakness, and acquiesce under the certainty, that our very imperfect knowledge or judgment cannot be the measure of the divine wisdom, or the universal standard of truth. So likewise it is with respect to the Christian religion. Some difficulties occur, in that revelation, which human reason can hardly clear ; but, as the truth of it stands upon evidence so strong and convincing, that it cannot be denied without much greater difficulties, than those that attend the belief of it, we ought not to reject it upon such objections, however mortifying they may be to our pride. That indeed, would have all things made plain to us : but God has thought proper to proportion our knowledge to our wants, not our pride. All that concerns our duty is clear, and as to other points, either of natu-

ral or revealed religion, if he has left some obscurities in them, is that any reasonable cause of complaint? Not to rejoice in the benefit of what he hath graciously allowed us to know, from a presumptuous disgust at our incapacity of knowing more, is as absurd as it would be to refuse to walk, because we cannot fly. Indeed, not even in heaven itself, not in the highest state of perfection to which a finite being can ever attain, will all the counsels of Providence, all the height and the depth of the infinite wisdom of God be ever disclosed or understood. Faith, even then, will be necessary; and there will be mysteries which cannot be penetrated by the most exalted archangel, and truths which cannot be known by him, otherwise than by revelation, or believed upon any other ground of assent, than a *submissive confidence in the divine wisdom*. What then shall man presume that his weak and narrow understanding is sufficient to guide him into all truth, without any need of revelation or faith? Shall he complain, that “the ways of God are not like his ways, and past his finding out?” True philosophy, as well as true Christianity, would teach us a wiser and modester part. It would teach us to be content within those bounds which God has assigned to us, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.—*Lord Lyttleton on the Conversion of Paul.*

CHRISTIAN MYSTERIES IN STRICT ANALOGY WITH THE COURSE OF NATURE.—The mutual instrumentality of beings to each other’s happiness and misery, unfolded in the Scriptures, is an argument of their divine authority. The Scripture account of the fall of man, his redemption by Christ, and the influences exerted upon him by good and evil angels, is so far

from affording an objection against the Christian religion, that it is a considerable evidence for it, when viewed in a truly philosophical light. God works in every thing by means, by those which, according to our present language and short-sightedness, are termed bad and impious, as well as by the good and evidently fit ones; and all these means require a definite time, before they can accomplish their respective ends. This occurs to daily observation in the course and constitution of nature. And the Scripture doctrine concerning the fall, the redemption by Christ, and the influences of good and evil angels, are only such intimations concerning the principal invisible means that lead man to his ultimate end, happiness in being united to God, as accelerate him in his progress thither. According to the Scriptures, Adam hurts all through frailty; Christ saves all from his love and compassion to all; evil angels tempt through malice; and good ones assist and defend, in obedience to the will of God, and his original and ultimate design of making all happy. These things are indeed clothed in a considerable variety of expression, suited to our present way of acting, conceiving, and speaking; (which ways are however all of divine original, God having taught mankind in the patriarchal times, the language, as one may say, in which he spake to them then and afterwards;) but these expressions can have no greater real import, than that of signifying to us the means made use of by God; he being, according to the Scripture, as well as reason, the only real agent, in all the transactions that relate to man, to angels, &c. And to object to the method of producing happiness by this or that means, because of the time required to accomplish the end, of the mixture of evil, &c. is to require that all God's creatures should at once be created infinitely happy,

or rather, have existed so from all eternity, *i. e.* should be *gods* and not *creatures*.—*Hartley's Observations on Man*, ii. 182.

'Tis upon this very foundation, that wicked and profane men are wont to build their blasphemous calumnies against the Christian religion, only because they misunderstand it. They imagine, that it consists purely in the adoration of the Divinity, considered as great, powerful, and eternal. This is properly deism, and stands almost as far removed from Christianity as atheism; which is directly opposite to it. Yet hence they would infer the falsehood of our religion; because, (say they,) were it true, God would have manifested himself under its dispensation by so visible tokens, that it should have been impossible for any man not to know him.

But let them conclude what they will against deism, they will be able to draw no such conclusion to the prejudice of Christianity; which acknowledges, that, since the fall, God does not manifest himself to us with all the evidence that is possible; and which consists properly in the mystery of a Redeemer, who, by sustaining at once the divine and human nature, has recovered men out of the corruption of sin, that he might reconcile them to God in his divine person.

True religion, therefore, instructs men in these two principles, that there is a God, whom they are capable of knowing and enjoying; and that there are such corruptions in their nature, as render them unworthy of him. There is the same importance in apprehending the one as the other of these points: and it is alike dangerous for man to know God, without the knowledge of his own misery, and to know his own misery without the knowledge of a Redeemer, who may deliver him from it. To apprehend one without the other, begets either the pride of

philosophers, who know God, but not their own misery; or the despair of atheists, who know their own misery, but not the author of their deliverance.

And as it is of equal necessity to man, that he should obtain the knowledge of both these principles, so is it equally agreeable to the mercy of God, that he should afford the means of such a knowledge. To perform this, is the office, and the very essence of Christianity.

Upon this foot let men examine the order and economy of the world, and let them see whether all things do not conspire in establishing these two fundamentals of our religion.

If any one knows not himself to be full of pride and ambition, of concupiscence and injustice, of weakness and wretchedness, he is blind beyond dispute. And if any one who knows himself to labour under these defects, at the same time desires not to be rescued from them, what can we say of a man who has thus abandoned his reason? What remains then but that we preserve the highest veneration for a religion, which so well understands the infirmities of mankind? and that we profess the heartiest wishes for the truth of a religion, which engageth to heal those infirmities by so happy, so desirable a relief?—*Pascal's Thoughts*, p. 25.

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES WORTHY TO BE RECEIVED.

—When we have, from the purity of its doctrines, and the external evidence of miracles, prophecy, and human testimony, satisfied ourselves of the truth of the Christian revelation, it becomes us to believe even such parts of it, as could never have been found out by human reason. And thus it is, that our natural notions of God and his providence are wonderfully refined and improved by what is revealed in holy writ: so that the meanest of our people, who has had a Christian education, knows a great deal more

on these subjects, than could ever be discovered by the wisest of the ancient philosophers. That many things in the divine government, and many particulars relating to the divine nature, as declared in scripture, should surpass our comprehension, is not to be wondered at; for we are daily puzzled with things more within our sphere: we know that our own soul and body are united, but of the manner of that union we know nothing. A past eternity we cannot comprehend; and a future eternity is an object by which our reason is astonished and confounded: yet nothing can be more certain than that one eternity is past, and another to come.—*Beattie's Elements of Moral Science*, i. 376.

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES NOT TO BE EXPLAINED AWAY.—To several learned and ingenious writers, some doctrines of the Christian religion have appeared so contradictory to all the principles of reason and equity, that they cannot assent to them, nor believe that they can be derived from the fountain of all truth and justice. In order therefore to satisfy themselves and others, who may labour under the same difficulties, they have undertaken the arduous task of reconciling revelation and reason; and great would have been their merits, had they begun at the right end; that is, had they endeavoured to exalt the human understanding to the comprehension of the sublime doctrines of the gospel, rather than to reduce those doctrines to the low standard of human reason; but, unfortunately for themselves and many others, they have made choice of the latter method, and as the shortest way to effect it, have with inconsiderate rashness expunged from the New Testament every divine declaration, which agrees not exactly with their own notions of truth and rectitude; and this they have attempted by no other means, than by absurd ex-

planations, or by bold assertions that they are not there, in direct contradiction to the sense of language, and the whole tenour of those writings ; as some philosophers have ventured, in opposition to all men's senses and even to their own, to deny the existence of matter, for no other reason, but because they find in it properties which they are unable to account for. Thus they have reduced Christianity to a mere system of ethics, and retain no part of it but the moral, which, in fact, is no characteristic part of it at all, as this, though in a manner less perfect, makes a part of every religion which ever appeared in the world.—*Soame Jenyns' Works*, iii. 245.

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES PROVED BY THEIR ENEMIES.—Libertines and ungodly men, who devote themselves blindly to their own passions, without either knowing God, or giving themselves the trouble to search after him, do yet verify by this their conduct, one of those foundations of our faith, which they particularly oppose, that the present state of human nature is a state of corruption. Again, the *Jews*, who with so obstinate a spirit resist the evidences of Christianity, confirm in like manner the other great foundation of our faith, which they principally endeavour to destroy, that *Jesus Christ* is the true *Messias*, that he came to redeem mankind, and to retrieve us from the misery and corruption, into which we were fallen. And this, as well by the estate to which we see them at present reduced, and which was foretold in their own prophecies themselves, which are still in their hands, and which, with the utmost caution they preserve inviolable, as containing the proper marks and character of their *Messias*. Thus may the chief evidences, both of the corruption of human nature, and of the redemption by

Jesus Christ, which are the two leading articles established by the *Christian* faith, be drawn from the libertines, who cast off the care of all religion ; and from the *Jews*, who are irreconcilable enemies to the truth.—*Pascal's Thoughts*.

SUMMARY OF THE PRINCIPAL CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES.—If Christianity is to be learned out of the New Testament, and words have any meaning affixed to them, the fundamental principles of it are these. That mankind came into this world in a depraved and fallen condition ; that they are placed here for a while, to give them an opportunity to work out their salvation, that is, by a virtuous and pious life to purge off their guilt and depravity, and recover their lost state of happiness and innocence in a future life ; that this they are unable to perform without the grace and assistance of God ; and that, after their best endeavours, they cannot hope for pardon from their own merits, but only from the merits of Christ, and the atonement made for their transgressions by his sufferings and death. This is clearly the sum and substance of the Christian dispensation ; and so adverse is it to all the principles of human reason, that, if brought before her tribunal, it must inevitably be condemned. If we give no credit to its divine authority, any attempt to reconcile them is useless ; and, if we believe it, presumptuous in the highest degree. To prove the reasonableness of a revelation is in fact to destroy it ; because a revelation implies information of something which reason cannot discover, and therefore must be different from its deductions, or it would be no revelation.—*Soame Jenyns' Works*, iii. 248.

The tracts contained in the book, which in distinction, we term the Bible, unquestionably develop the most singular history and most original system

of philosophy ever promulgated. With the history I have no concern at present. The sum of its philosophy, if I understand it rightly, is this: The world, that is, men generally, without noticing degrees, is declared to be ignorant and corrupt, corrupt in ignorance, ignorant because corrupt, and wretched alike in both. This wretchedness is not described as light or transitory, but is depicted in the strongest colours. Bondage, darkness, and death, are the gloomy images by which it is generally represented; and though a nice accuracy of expression is plainly avoided, there are numerous passages of Scripture, which concur with the analogy of natural things, to make it probable, that this unhappy state is likely to endure through endless ages, and to become as it advances darker and more desperate. In order that we may escape from so sad a condition, the Scriptures call upon us to come to God by faith, which in substance I understand thus: Man trusting in his own strength and wisdom, has gone on from age to age in misery and sin. He neither understands what it is that constitutes happiness, nor could attain to it if he did. He sees not, that to be alienated from God is to be wretched; or, if a few among the wisest, perceiving the vanity of earthly things, begin to suspect this, they know so little what God is, or how his favour is to be secured, that their philosophy ends at last in rhapsody and mysticism. The Almighty, pitying his creatures, tells them, that they are not only in a very unhappy condition, which they a little (though but a little) suspected; but that they are exceedingly blind and foolish, which for the most part they suspected not at all; that, if they would be happy, they must come to him, and laying aside for ever their own silly conceits of what is good, learn the way of life, and walk in it. This coming to God, (or however else we

please to express it,) and taking his word for our rule of conduct, in the full conviction that it will issue greatly to our advantage; as it is obviously the strongest expression of faith, so it is, I apprehend, what is, primarily and principally meant by that word in both Testaments.

Struck with such an invitation, and touched by the preventing grace of God, many are led to inquire more particularly into the nature of that which promises so much. On examination it appears, that what God declares to be needful for happiness, is wholly different from all the things which a majority of mankind are pursuing. He does not give us rules for lengthening our existence, fortifying our health, improving our fortunes, or advancing our stations in this life; for quickening or multiplying the common sources or objects of enjoyment, nor even (at least properly, and for their own sake) does he teach us how our affections may become more lively, or our understandings acquire strength and elevation. The word of God, condemning many, neglecting the residue, of these things, calls on all who will listen, to labour assiduously for the attainment of a certain character, or nature of mind, which is composed of many particular qualities, and is usually denominated by the term holiness, or some equivalent expression. This character, it is declared, will most nearly assimilate us to God; make us capable here of enjoying a portion of that felicity which he possesses without measure; and, by securing to us his favour, bring us, after this life is ended, to a state far more perfect and glorious, than at present we can either enjoy or conceive.

All this, we see, might have been known, without our having any apprehension of the doctrine of a Redeemer; but the value of that doctrine cannot be

understood, without a just apprehension of the state of things, for which it was provided. I speak particularly of the *doctrine*. The value of redemption as a fact, is quite a different matter from the value of the knowledge of that fact. This is called "the knowledge of salvation; good tidings of great joy." It is indeed a joyful thing to hear that salvation is attainable; but how much more joyful to be taught the means, and furnished with the most pressing motives for attaining it. For the present purpose, salvation and holiness may be considered as the same; and for the promotion of holiness the doctrine of the atonement is, above all rivalry, most efficient.—*Works of John Bowdler, jun.* * ii. 181.

* Mr. Bowdler "was possessed of an amiable character and uncommon talents. He gave, particularly, great promise of distinction in his professional pursuits. He had applied himself with singular success to the noble study of eloquence; and possessed a style of speaking, unusually nervous, manly, and original. With this great excellence, with knowledge foreign to the habits of most lawyers, and with technical acquirements which hardly any one, so gifted as he was in other respects, ever brought to the bar at his outset in life, his rapid attainment to the heights of his profession was a matter of certainty, had life only been accorded."—*Edin. Review*, vol. xxviii. p. 336.

CHAPTER IX.

 TESTIMONIES TO THE PARTICULAR DOCTRINES
OF REVELATION

SECTION I.

THE EXISTENCE OF SPIRITUAL BEINGS.

RELIGION is the most important of all things, the great point of discrimination, that divides the man from the brute. It is our special prerogative, that we can converse with that which we cannot see, and believe in that, the existence of which is reported to us by none of our senses. Such is the abstract and exalted nature of man. This it is, that constitutes us intellectual, and truly entitles us to the denomination of reasonable beings. All that passes before the senses of the body is a scenic exhibition; and he, that is busied about these fantastic appearances, "walketh in a vain shew, and disquieteth himself in vain." Invisible things are the only realities; invisible things alone are the things that shall remain.—*Godwin's Mandeville.*

Lastly, if this notion of unmaterial spirit may have perhaps some difficulties in it, not easy to be explain-

ed, we have therefore no more reason to deny or doubt the existence of such spirits, than we have to deny or doubt the existence of body; because the notion of body is cumbered with some difficulties very hard, and, perhaps, impossible to be explained, or understood by us. For I would fain have instanced any thing in our notion of spirit more perplexed, or nearer a contradiction, than the very notion of body includes in it; the divisibility *in infinitum* of any finite extension, involving us, whether we grant or deny it, in consequences impossible to be explicated, or made in our apprehensions consistent; consequences that carry greater difficulty, and more apparent absurdity, than any thing that can follow from the notion of an immaterial knowing substance. Which we are not at all to wonder at, since we, having but some few superficial ideas of things, discovered to us only by the senses from without, or by the mind, reflecting on what it experiments in itself within, have no knowledge beyond that, and much less of the internal constitution, and true nature of things, being destitute of faculties to attain it. And therefore experimenting and discovering in ourselves knowledge, and the power of voluntary motion, as certainly as we experiment, or discover in things without us, the cohesion and separation of solid parts, which is the extension and motion of bodies, we have as much reason to be satisfied with our notion of immaterial spirit, as with our notion of body; and the existence of the one, as well as the other. For it being no more a contradiction, that thinking should exist, separate and independent from solidity, than it is a contradiction, that solidity should exist, separate and independent from thinking, they being both but simple ideas, independent one from another; and having as clear and distinct ideas in us of thinking, as of soli-

dity, I know not why we may not as well allow a thinking thing without solidity, *i. e. immaterial*, to exist, as a solid thing without thinking, *i. e. matter*, to exist; especially since it is no harder to conceive how thinking should exist without matter, than how matter should think. For whensoever we would proceed beyond these simple ideas we have from sensation and reflection, and dive farther into the nature of things, we fall presently into darkness and obscurity, perplexedness and difficulties; and can discover nothing farther but our own blindness and ignorance.—*Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding*, Book ii. chap. 23.

We cannot form a competent idea of the Supreme Being: he is superior to every image, which derives its origin from the senses. It is however certain, that he is omnipotent, all-wise, and infinite in every perfection. We have every possible reason to think, that, betwixt this Being and man, there are other creatures, who approach nearer to God in sanctity, virtue, and perfection; and who are far superior to man. I know, that, in strict propriety of speech, there cannot be an uniform gradation between finite and infinite; but the distance between God and feeble mortals is so immense, that we may suppose with the highest probability, that, in the celestial habitations, are beings of a much more excellent nature than man, whose understanding is so much limited, and whose heart is exceedingly depraved.—*Baron Haller's Letters to his Daughter*, let. 2.

All the ideas that man can form of the ways of Providence, and of the employments of angels and spirits, must ever fall short of the reality; but still it is right to think of them, and to raise his ideas as high as he can. He glorifies the inhabitant of hea-

ven, and at the same time gives a proof of human greatness, when he raises the idea of perfection to the highest degree, that we are capable of conceiving. What can have a more exalting influence on the earthly life, than, in these first days of our existence, to make ourselves conversant with the lives of the blessed, with the happy spirits, whose society we shall hereafter enjoy, and with the future glories of the virtuous. By these ideas, the mind is prepared and formed to step forth with more confidence on the great theatre of the world. We should accustom ourselves to consider the spirits of heaven as always around us, observing all our steps, and witnessing our most secret actions. Whoever is become familiar with these ideas will find the most solitary place peopled with the best society.—*Klopstock's Letters, translated by Miss Smith, p. 217. Note.*

SECTION II.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

THE Deity distinguished in three persons, (although essentially inseparable,) every person is said in the Scriptures to help one another; as the Father by the Son created the world, (Col. i. 16. John i. 3.) the Son by the Spirit redeemed the world, (Luke iv. 43.) the Holy Spirit, sent both from the Father and the Son, comforteth, defendeth, and regenerateth his elect of the world.—*Lord Napier of Merchiston on the Apocalypse.*

Faith contains the doctrine of the nature of God, the attributes of God, and of the works of God. The nature of God consists of three persons in unity of Godhead. The attributes of God are common to the Deity, or respective to the persons. The works of God summary are two, that of the creation, and that of the redemption: and both these works, as in total they appertain to the unity of the Godhead; so in their parts they refer to the three persons: that of the creation in the mass of the matter, to the Father; in the disposition of the form, to the Son; and in the continuance and conservation of the being, to the Holy Spirit,—so that of the redemption, in the election and counsel, to the Father; in the whole act and consummation, to the Son; and in the application, to the Holy Spirit, for by the Holy Ghost was Christ conceived in flesh; and by his operation are the elect regenerated in spirit.—*Bacon's Essays*, p. 347.

What the Scripture acquaints us with, is this, and no more: That what it characterises the *Father*, the avenger of wrong, and rewarder of right, is *God*; that what it characterises the *Son*, the *Word*, the Creator of the world, the *Redeemer* of mankind sent for that purpose by the Father, is *God*; that the *Holy Spirit*, the correspondent with, and Comforter of the spirits of men, is *God*; and that, nevertheless, the *Deity*, the *Self-existent Being*, is but *One*. That these matters are so, Scripture expressly declares; and the manner in which it expresses the last proposition, Deut. vi. 4. is worth attending to. Our translators render it, *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord*. The original says, *Jehovah our God is one Self-existent Being*; for so the word translated *Lord* signifies. Now, what is there in our knowledge, in our conceptions, or in our reason, that can qualify us to determine the *modus* of the existence, or of the ac-

tion of the invisible Deity? That we have no sort of idea of the substance of that soul which acts in us, or of the manner of its existence or actions, is an agreed point; what imprudence then must it be in us, to pretend to determine, from our conceptions, or rather inability to conceive, the condition, or manner of existence and acting of the Supreme Being, the least of whose works are in very deed beyond our comprehension?—*President Forbes's Reflections on Incredulity.*

Where shall we fix our eyes, dazzled with the magnificent objects presented to our view? Is it before the incomprehensible Trinity, the mysterious incarnation, or the divine sacrifice of love made by the son of God, that we shall humble our insignificance? The Trinity opens an immense field for philosophic studies, whether we consider it in the attributes of God, or collect the vestiges of this dogma diffused throughout the ancient East. For, so far from being the invention of a modern age, it bears the stamp, which imparts exquisite beauty to every thing upon which it is impressed. It is a pitiful mode of reasoning to reject whatever we cannot comprehend. Were we to begin with the most simple things in life, it would be easy to prove that we know absolutely nothing; and shall we then pretend to penetrate into the depths of divine wisdom?—*Chateaubriand's Beauties of Christianity*, i. 20.

Both of which doctrines (the unity of God and the acknowledgment of three divine persons) are inevitable and indispensable while we profess to regulate our faith by the testimonies of the holy Scriptures as handed down to us, without presuming to exercise the Socinian expedient of lopping off or altering (as a supposed *corruption* or *interpolation*) every text of Scripture, that opposes the system, or set of notions,

that we happen to have adopted. And therefore the true Unitarian Christian, who acknowledges but *one God, one Jehovah, one divine nature* (Θεότης) or *Godhead*, and at the same time, nevertheless, is convinced, that *three Divine persons* are really revealed to us under the title of *Jehovah* in the Old Testament, and under the the title of Θεός, or *God* in the New Testament, and that the supreme attributes of the DIVINE NATURE are applied to each in both Testaments, will of course be aware also, that each of these divine persons must necessarily be *the great God*, and the only *potentate*; as there is but one God, one only supreme power or Godhead. Our Lord has delivered this doctrine of *his unity with the Father* in various modes of expression; and yet the true nature and manner of that unity must still remain a mystery; because a perfect knowledge of that eternal BEING, which in every way is infinite, cannot possibly fall within the comprehension of our finite understanding.—*Granville Sharpe on the Divinity of Christ.*

In the disputes concerning the Trinity, and incarnation of Christ, if the words *person, substance, nature, &c.* be used as in other cases, or any way defined, the most express contradictions follow: yet the language of the Scriptures is most difficult, sublime, and mysterious, in respect to the person of Christ; so that one cannot fall short of paying all that honour to Christ, which the most orthodox believe to be required.—*Hartley's Observations on Man*, ii, 357.

This article of the Creed hath been coeval with Christianity, and was wont to be demanded at baptism, of the persons who came to be baptized, as appears from the form of the celebration of baptism, which is in the name of the Son, as well as of the Father and the Holy Ghost, wherein is necessarily supposed a belief of Jesus Christ to be the Son of God,

it being in itself impossible to be baptized in the name of the Son, without acknowledging the person, in whose name he is baptized, to be that Son: Which appellation of the Son of God denotes his divine nature, as that of the Son of man implies his human.—

Chancellor Sir Peter King on the Creed.

I think, however, that the words of our Saviour himself oblige me to believe, and with a full acquiescence of faith, that Jesus was not a simple man, nor even a mere angelic being; but that the Author and Creator of all things, hath united himself in an incomprehensible manner to beings which are not pure spirits, to the human soul of Christ; that in this soul were visibly manifested divine qualities and perfections; and that this union of the divine with human nature was in Jesus so intimate, that he both thought and acted as God thinks and acts;—and that it was with justice therefore, that divine honours were paid him, and that he was called God.

In a word, such a Redeemer must be more than mere man; because a man is always exposed to error and to vice. But the divinity, with which Jesus was invested, rendered his wisdom complete; banished every passion; directed his miraculous powers; spoke through him in a manner not to be imitated by all the eloquence of man; conducted him constantly in a right course of action, without deviating from the great design, which was the object of his heavenly mission. This Jesus, who from the beginning had been with God, who was come from God, was alone capable of revealing his counsels to men. He, to whom the Father had committed all judgment, could alone inform men what the divine justice had prepared against the workers of iniquity. This union of God with Christ was doubtless a mark of goodness worthy of our admiration, without which

the coming of Jesus into the world had been of no effect.—*Baron Haller's Letters to his Daughter*, let. xi.

SECTION III

THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY AND MISERY.

Who can without horror consider the whole earth as the empire of destruction? It abounds in wonders; it abounds also in victims; it is a vast field of carnage and contagion! Every species is without pity; pursued and torn to pieces, through the earth, and air, and water. In man, there is more wretchedness, than in all other animals put together. He smarts continually under two scourges, which other animals never feel, anxiety and listlessness in appetence which make him weary of himself. He loves life, and yet he knows that he must die. If he enjoy some transient good, for which he is thankful to heaven, he suffers various evils, and is at last devoured by worms. This knowledge is his fatal prerogative: other animals have it not. He feels it every moment rankling and corroding in his breast. Yet he spends the transient moment of his existence, in diffusing the misery that he suffers; in cutting the throats of his fellow creatures for pay; in cheating and being cheated; in robbing and being robbed; in serving that he may command; and in repenting of all that he does. The bulk of mankind are nothing more than a crowd of wretches, equally criminal and unfortunate; and the globe contains rather carcases than men. I tremble,

upon a review of this dreadful picture, to find that it implies a complaint against providence ; and I wish that I had never been born.—*Voltaire, as quoted in Simpson's Plea for Religion.*

But when I come afterwards to take a view of the particular rank and relation, in which I stand as an individual among the fellow creatures of my species ; to consider the different ranks of society, and the persons by whom they are filled ; what a scene is presented to me ! Where is that order and regularity before observed ? The scenes of nature present to my view the most perfect harmony and proportion ; those of mankind nothing but confusion and disorder. The physical elements of things act in concert with each other, the moral world alone is a chaos of discord. Mere animals are happy ; but man, their lord and sovereign, is miserable. Where, supreme wisdom, are thy laws ? Is it thus, O providence ! thou governest the world ? What is become of thy power, thou Supreme Beneficence, when I see evil prevailing on the earth ? In meditating on the nature of man, I conceived that I discovered two distinct principles ; the one raising him to the study of eternal truths, the love of justice and moral beauty, bearing him aloft to the regions of the intellectual world, the contemplation of which yields the truest delight to the philosopher ; the other debasing him even below himself, subjecting him to the slavery of sense, the tyranny of the passions, and exciting these to counteract every noble and generous sentiment inspired by the former. When I perceived myself hurried away by two such contrary powers, I naturally concluded that man is not one simple individual substance. I will, and I will not ; I perceive myself at once free and a slave ; I see what is good, I admire it, and yet I do the evil ; I am active when I listen to my reason, and passive when

hurried away by my passions ; while my greatest uneasiness is to find, when fallen under temptations, that I had the power of resisting them.—*Rousseau's Emilius*, ii. 150.

Now whereas it is thought by some of the Fathers, as by St. Augustine, with whom St. Ambrose joineth, that, by sin the perfection of the image is lost, and not the image itself ; both opinions, by this distinction may be well reconciled ; to wit, that the image of God in man may be taken two ways ; for, either it is considered in regard to natural gifts, and consisteth therein, namely, to have a reasonable and understanding nature ; and in this sense, the image of God is more lost by sin, than the very reasonable and understanding nature is lost, (for sin doth not abolish and take away these natural gifts ;) and the image of God is considered according to supernatural gifts, namely, of divine grace and heavenly glory, which is indeed the perfection and accomplishment of the natural image ; and this manner of similitude and image of God is wholly blotted out and destroyed.—*Sir Walter Raleigh's History of the World*.

But it is the corruption, that I bear within me, not the contagion of commerce (intercourse) without me. 'Tis that unruly regiment within me, that will destroy me ; 'tis I that do infect myself. I feel that original canker corrode and devour me, and therefore, "*defenda me Dios de me*," " Lord deliver me from myself," is a part of my litany, and the first voice of my retired imaginations.—*Brown's Religio Medici*.

The same causes (that is, different customs, methods of education, instruction, habits, and contrary examples) often concur to corrupt the manners of men, though our depravation in our present state cannot wholly be ascribed to them. For such is the present condition

of mankind, that none seem to be born without some weaknesses or diseases of the soul, of one kind or other, though in different degrees. Every one finds in himself the notion of a *truly good man*, to which no man ever comes up in his conduct. Nay, the very best of mankind must acknowledge, that in innumerable instances, they come short of their duty, and of that standard of moral goodness they find within them. And, although nature has given us all some little sparks, as it were, to kindle up the several virtues, and sown, as it were, some seeds of them; yet, by our own bad conduct and foolish notions, we seldom suffer them to grow to maturity. But a full and certain account of the original of these disorders, and of the effectual remedies for them, in all the different degrees in which they appear in different persons, will never be given by any mortal without a divine revelation.—*Hutcheson's Introduction to Moral Philosophy*, b. i. chap. i. § 17.

There are some, I know, who extricate themselves from this difficulty very concisely by asserting, that there is in fact no such original depravity, no such innate propensity to vice in human nature; but, as this assertion is directly contrary to the express declaration of the Scriptures, to the opinion of the philosophers and moralists of all ages, and to the most constant and invariable experience of every hour, I think they no more deserve an answer, than they who would affirm, that a stone has no tendency to the centre by its natural gravity, or that flame has no inclination to ascend.—*Soame Jenyns' Works*, iii. 93.

It is not amongst the champions of vice alone, that we are to look for instances of this depravity of mankind. Turn your eyes, my dear child, unto yourself, and examine your own heart,—that heart filled with sweetness and beneficence, which hath never given

the least disquietude to your parents, your husband, or your friends; that heart so compassionate and susceptible of the tenderest and most benevolent sentiments, which rejoices to see virtue recompensed though in a stranger, whose affliction also it can sooth and mollify. Compare your thoughts and actions with the perfect and invariable laws of God, and see how far you are removed from that perfection, which alone can render you acceptable to the Supreme Being.—*Baron Haller's Letters to his Daughter*, let. ii.

This is the just account of human nature, and human strength, in respect of truth and happiness. We have an idea of truth, not to be effaced by all the wiles of the sceptic; we have an incapacity of argument, not to be rectified by all the power of the dogmatist. We wish for truth, and find nothing in ourselves but uncertainty. We seek after happiness, and are presented with nothing but misery. Our double aim is, in effect, a double torture; while we are alike unable to compass either, and to relinquish either. These desires seem to have been left in us, partly as a punishment of our fall, and partly as an indication and remembrance whence we are fallen.

If man was not made for God, why is God alone sufficient for human happiness? If man was made for God, why is the human will, in all things, repugnant to the divine? Man is at a loss where to fix himself, and how to recover his rank in the world. He is unquestionably out of his way; he feels within himself the small remains of his once happy state, which he is now unable to retrieve. And yet this is what he daily courts and follows after, always with solicitude, and never with success; encompassed with darkness, which he can neither escape nor penetrate.—*Pascal's Thoughts*.

We behold, in the first place, the doctrine of original sin, which explains the whole nature of man, springing from this mystery. Unless we admit this truth, known by tradition to all nations, we shall be involved in impenetrable darkness. Without original sin, how shall we account for the vicious propensity of our nature, continually combated by a secret voice, which whispers that we were formed for virtue? Without a primitive fall, how shall we explain the aptitude of man for affliction; that sweat which fertilizes the rugged soil; the tears, the sorrows, the misfortunes of the righteous; the triumphs, the unpunished success of the wicked? It was because they were unacquainted with this degeneracy, that the philosophers of antiquity fell into such strange errors, and invented the notion of reminiscence.—*Chateaubriand's Beauties of Christianity*, i. 28.

'Tis in vain, O men, that you seek from yourselves the remedy of your miseries. All your lights extend to no farther discovery than this, that you cannot, from your own stores, be supplied with happiness or truth. The philosophers, who promised all things, could perform nothing in your behalf; they neither apprehended your true estate, nor your real good. What possibility was there of your receiving benefit from their prescriptions, who had not skill enough to understand your disease? Your chief infirmities are pride, which alienates you from God; and concupiscence, which fastens you down to earth; and their constant employment was to caress and entertain one or the other of these disorders. They, who presented God to you as the sole object of your contemplation, did but gratify your pride, by vainly insinuating, that your nature was constituted under a parity with the divine; and as for those, who saw the extravagance of such pretensions, what did they but set you

upon the other precipice, by tempting you to believe that your nature was of a piece with that of the beasts ; and by inclining you to place all your good in sensual delight, the portion of irrational creatures ? These could never be the means of discovering to you the injustice of your proceedings. Do not therefore expect instruction or consolation from men : It was I that first made you to be ; and 'tis I alone, which can teach you the knowledge of your own being. You are not now in the estate, under which you were formed by my hand : I created man holy, innocent, and perfect : I replenished him with light and understanding : I communicated to him my wonders and my glory : Then it was that the eye of man beheld the majesty of God. He did not then labour under that darkness, which blinds him under this mortality, and these miseries, which afflict and oppress him ; but he was unable to sustain so great degrees of splendour, without falling into presumption ; he was disposed to make himself the centre of his own happiness, and altogether independent from the divine succours ; and when he had withdrawn himself from my dominion, and affected an equality with me, by presuming to find all his happiness in himself, I abandoned him to his own guidance ; and, causing a general revolt amongst the creatures that were his subjects, I made them his enemies ; man himself is now become like unto the beast, and removed to such a distance from me, as scarce to retain some scattered rays and confused notices of his authority ; so far have all his discerning powers been either extinguished or disturbed ; his senses, being never the servants, and very often the masters of his reason, have driven him on the pursuit of unwarrantable pleasures. All the creatures with which he is surrounded, either grieve or torment, or tempt and seduce him ; thus ever maintaining a

sovereignty over him, either as they subdue him by their strength, or as they melt him with their charms, which is the more imperious, and more fatal tyranny.—*Pascal's Thoughts.*

For 'tis beyond doubt, that nothing appears so shocking to our reason, as that the transgression of the first man should derive a guilt on those, who, being so vastly distant from the fountain, seem incapable of sharing in the impure tincture. This transfusion is looked upon by us not only as impossible, but as unjust, could we suppose it to be possible.—Certainly nothing strikes our judgment with more harshness and violence, than such a doctrine. And yet, without this incomprehensible mystery, we are ourselves incomprehensible to our own mind. The clue, which knits together our whole fortune and condition, takes its turns and plies, in this amazing abyss, in so much that man will appear no less unconceivable without this mystery, than this mystery appears unconceivable to man. Original sin is *foolishness to men.* 'Tis granted to be so: wherefore reason ought not to be accused as defective in this knowledge; because it pretends not to be such as reason can ever fathom. For my own part, I cannot but declare, that so soon as the *Christian* religion discovers to me this one principle, that human nature is depraved, and fallen from God, this clears up my light, and enables me to distinguish throughout the characters of so divine a mystery.—*Pascal's Thoughts.*

SECTION IV.

THE EVIL AND PENALTY OF SIN.

THE EVIL OF SIN.—The aggravation of all crimes is to be estimated either from the persons injured or offended, or from the intrinsic malice, from whence those injuries and offences proceed. All offences are against either our Maker, our neighbour, or ourselves. Offences against our Maker have this particular aggravation, that they are committed against the person to whom we have the greatest obligations, and consequently do more immediately contradict the light of our own conscience. The obligations of our original being, and of our constant preservation during the whole course of our lives, which takes in all the blessings that we daily receive from him, are so peculiarly due to God, that they are not communicable to any earthly being. For, though we may and do, hourly, receive advantages from our fellow-creatures, yet those advantages are ultimately to be referred to God, by whose good providence those fellow-creatures are enabled to do us good. And, besides, the good they do us is as much for their sakes as for ours; since the advantages they receive from us, and those we receive from them, are reciprocal. But though our Creator is always doing good to us, we can do none to him; and, upon that score, he has a title to our obedience, and that implicit, when once we are satisfied it is he that commands. This makes *idolatry* to be so crying a sin, because it is a communication of that honour to the creature (whether inanimate or ani-

mate, it matters not) to which it can have no possible title, and is due to the Creator only. Upon this account also, irreligion and atheism are still worse, because they tear up all religion by the roots; and all service and worship is denied to him, to whom the utmost service and worship is justly due. This is so plain that it needs neither enlargement nor proof.—*Sir Richard Steele's Lover*, No. 32.

Of all the wonderful things, which constitute, or are intimately connected with, the dispensation of grace, perhaps there is none, of which we have so inadequate a conception, as sin; its essential deformity, and most fatal tendency. When we talk to a careless liver of the guilt of his ordinary conversation in the world, and describe sin in the fearful language of the Bible, we seem to him as dreamers. Even the most humble and advanced Christian finds it difficult to fix in his mind such a sense of the sanctity of God's law, and the terrible profaneness of violating it, as corresponds, in any tolerable degree, with the measure of those things in holy writ. Yet, certainly, it most nearly concerns us to appreciate them justly. Now it is impossible to conceive any truth so calculated to penetrate us with a just horror of sin in general, and with the deepest confusion for our own offences, as the doctrine of the cross. It stamps upon evil a character of darkness and horror, which no tongue can utter: it bears in its amazing mercy the most awful testimony to the majesty and justice of God; and while it pours gladness into the bosom of the penitent, speaks death to the presumptuous rebel. It is worth observing in this place, that an objection sometimes made to revelation, on account of the astonishing costliness of the sacrifice, which it declares to

have been provided as an atonement for guilt, admits of the same reply, which may be offered to the common argument against the moral character of God, from the extent and intensity of suffering allowed to prevail in the world. Both are calculated to attest visibly, and to all ages, the dreadful consequences of sin. Can it be said, that the apprehensions, entertained of this by mankind, are generally such, that we can think the evidence has been more than sufficient?—*Works of John Bowdler, jun.* ii. p. 185.

THE PUNISHMENTS OF SIN.—The rewards which Christianity promises to virtue, and the punishments with which it threatens guilt, produce at the first glance a conviction of their truth. The heaven and hell of Christians are not devised after the manner of any particular people, but founded on the general ideas, that are adapted to all nations, and to all classes of society. What can be more simple and yet more sublime, than the truths conveyed in these few words; the felicity of the righteous in a future life will consist in the full possession of God: the misery of the wicked will arise from a knowledge of the perfections of the Deity, and from being for ever deprived of their enjoyment.—*Chateaubriand's Beauties of Christianity*, i. 237.

It is probable, that the future misery of the wicked, may be both corporeal and mental. The punishments of the wicked in a future state may be corporeal, though the happiness of the blessed should not be so. For sensuality is one great part of vice, and a principal source of it. It may be necessary therefore, that actual fire should feed upon the elementary body, and whatever else is added to it after the re-

surrection, in order to burn out the stains of sin *. The destruction of this world by fire, spoken of both in the Scriptures and in many profane writings; the phenomena of comets, and of the sun, and fixed stars, those vast bodies of fire, which burn for ages; the great quantity of sulphureous matter contained in the bowels of the earth; the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire and brimstone, alluded to in the New Testament; the representation of future punishment under the emblem of the fire of Gehenna; and, above all, the express passages of Scripture, in which it is declared that the wicked shall be punished by fire, even everlasting fire, confirm this position concerning the corporeal nature of future punishment, as well as give light to one another. But, if the punishment of another world should be corporeal in some measure, there is still the greatest reason to believe that they will be spiritual also; and that by selfishness, ambition, malevolence, envy, revenge, cruelty, profaneness, murmuring against God, infidelity, and blasphemy, men will become tormentors to themselves and to each other; deceive and be deceived; infatuate and be infatuated; so as not to be able to repent and turn to God, till the appointed time comes, if that should ever be.—*Hartley's Observations on Man*, ii. 399.

ETERNITY OF FUTURE PUNISHMENTS.—This lake, burning with fire and brimstone, are torments enduring for evermore, as saith St. John, Apoc. xx. 10, and are the second death of the soul, Apoc. xx. 14;

* This refers to a peculiar hypothesis of this celebrated author respecting universal restoration; but the truth or falsity of which does not affect his testimony to the Scripture doctrine of the nature of future punishment.

and therefore is it neither a temporal punishment, neither the fire of purgatory, but the eternal flaming fire of Gehenna, out of the which there is no redemption.—*Lord Napier of Merchiston on the Apocalypse.*

From the same source springs another objection, of equal validity as to revelation, founded on the doctrine of the perpetuity of punishment. Here again the incomprehensible, the infinitely perfect Being, is measured by the span of the low, blind, grovelling creature, that makes the objection; who, because he cannot comprehend why this justice is suited to the divine nature, concludes at once, that the doctrine is impossible, and therefore false; and, in consequence, rejects the revelation which is said to assert it, without giving himself the trouble to examine the evidence that supports that revelation, or to inquire whether the matter that thus shocks him, is really revealed. A careful inquiry might possibly satisfy him, that the perpetuity of punishments is not absolutely affirmed; and that no more is necessarily to be inferred from revelation, than that the misery of the damned is to endure for ages. But such an inquiry would give him competent satisfaction, that the revelation he wantonly rejects, is in very deed the word of God; and would dispose him to believe whatever it clearly declares concerning the Deity and his ways, without considering how far that might or might not tally with his conceits.—*President Forbes's Reflections on Incredulity.*

Punishments, it has been said, ought not to be eternal; because they must tend to the reformation of men. But will the punishments of a limited time, as a few years for instance, or even for ages, produce in man an eternal obedience, since, in comparison of eternity, any duration, which we may assign to these pains, will be but infinitely short? would that impa-

tience, that murmuring, that restlessness under the judgments, which their limited sufferings produce, be removed by new afflictions? and from this mode of reasoning would there not be required a prolongation of chastisements? The knowledge, which we have of the human heart, will not permit us to hope, that, through the means of punishment, vice will be changed into virtue. And God, who perfectly knows us, knows also, that this limited punishment must in the end terminate in that which is eternal.—*Baron Haller's Letters to his Daughter*, let. 13.

The idea generally entertained of the goodness of God, to which this doctrine is supposed so repugnant, has been, an unlimited disposition to promote the happiness of all his creatures. With this extensive attribute, thus unqualified, not only the eternity of future punishments, but the smallest degree of existing evil, is to our limited understandings irreconcilable; but then they are each equally so: infinite benevolence cannot admit of “majus or minus,” it is one and immutable. The most transient headach, and the damnation of all mankind, are in this view involved in the same mystery. Actual evil does exist, and cannot be inconsistent with the moral perfections of God: it is evident, therefore, either that we are mistaken in supposing such an attribute inherent in the Almighty, or that, being utterly in the dark upon the subject, we can neither affirm nor deny any thing concerning it. To maintain then, that such must be the nature of divine benevolence, and thence infer the impossibility of infinite vengeance, is to talk ignorantly and at random.—*Works of John Bowdler, jun.* ii. 123.

SECTION V.

MAN'S INCAPABILITY OF CLAIMING MERIT WITH GOD.

SUCH is the mercy of God, that these good works, that we acknowledge to be done by his Holy Spirit working in us, he imputes them to be our works. But, certainly, let the presumptuous man assure himself, that, if he esteem these good works to be of himself, God, in his judgment, shall let him find, to his confusion, that only God is good, and that no goodness is in man, and that all flesh is subdued to sin. Woe, therefore, to him, who otherwise presumptuously judgeth.—*Lord Napier of Merchiston on the Apocalypse.*

Repentance and penitence is not sufficient for him that hath fled from his sovereign's banner : he must first do some valiant act, before, by the law of arms, he can be restored to his former bearing. Repentance helps not when sin is renewed ; not to do good is to commit evil, at least by omission of what I ought to do. Before I come to the constant practice of piety, I am sure, I cannot be sure of complete glory. If I did all strictly, I were yet unprofitable ; and, if God had not appointed my faith to perfect me, miserable. If he were not full of mercies, how unhappy a creature were man !—*Feltham's Resolves*, No. 80.

For God is merciful unto all, because better to the worst, than the best deserve ; and to say, he punisheth none in this world, though it be a paradox, is no absurdity. To one that hath committed murder, if

the judge should only ordain a fine, it were madness to call this a punishment, and to repine at the sentence, rather than admire the clemency of the judge. Thus, our offences, being mortal, and deserving not only death, but damnation, if the goodness of God be content to traverse and pass them over with a loss, misfortune, or disease; what frenzy were it to term this a punishment, rather than an extremity of mercy, and to groan under the rod of his judgments, rather than admire the sceptre of his mercies. Therefore to adore, honour, and admire him, is a debt of gratitude due from the obligation of our nature, states, and conditions; and, with these thoughts, he that knows them best, will not deny that I adore him. That I obtain heaven and the bliss thereof is accidental, and not the intended work of my devotion; it being a felicity I can neither think to deserve, nor scarce in modesty expect.—*Brown's Religio Medici.*

You will see in this my notion of good works, that I am far from expecting to merit heaven by them. By heaven we understand a state of happiness, infinite in degree, and eternal in duration: I can do nothing to deserve such rewards. He that, for giving a draught of water to a thirsty person, should expect to be paid with a good plantation, would be modest in his demands, compared with those, who think they deserve heaven for the little good they do on earth. Even the mixed, imperfect pleasures we enjoy in this world, are rather from God's goodness than our merit: how much more such happiness of heaven! For my part, I have not the vanity to think I deserve it, the folly to expect it, nor the ambition to desire it; but content myself in submitting to the will and disposal of that God who made me, who has hitherto preserved and blessed me, and in whose fa-

therly goodness I may well confide, that he will never make me miserable; and that even the afflictions I may at any time suffer, shall tend to my benefit.

The faith you mention has certainly its use in the world: I do not desire to see it diminished, nor would I endeavour to lessen it in any man; but I wish it were more productive of good works than I have generally seen it.—*Franklin's Correspondence*, i. 2.

In estimating our own merit, in judging of our own character and conduct, there are two different standards, to which we may naturally compare them. The one is the idea of exact propriety and perfection, so far as we are each of us capable of comprehending that idea. The other is that degree of approximation to this idea, which is commonly attained in the world, and which the greater part of our friends and companions, of our rivals and competitors, may have actually arrived at. So far as our attention is directed towards the first standard, the wisest and best of us all, can, in his own character and conduct, see nothing but weakness and imperfection, can discover no ground for arrogance and presumption, but a great deal for humility, regret, and repentance. So far as our attention is directed towards the second, we may be affected either in one way or in the other, and feel ourselves either really above, or really below, the standard to which we compare ourselves.

The wise and virtuous man directs his principal attention to the first standard; the idea of exact propriety and perfection. There exists in the mind of every man an idea of this kind, gradually formed from his observations upon the character and conduct both of himself and of other people. It is the slow, gradual and progressive work of the great demigod with-

in the breast, the great judge and arbiter of conduct*. This idea is in every man, more or less accurately drawn, its colouring is more or less just, its outlines are more or less exactly designed according to the delicacy and acuteness of that sensibility, with which those observations were made, and according to the care and attention employed in making them. In the wise and virtuous man they have been made with the most acute and delicate sensibility; and the utmost care and attention have been employed in making them. Every day some feature is improved; every day some blemish is corrected. He has studied this idea more than other people, he comprehends it more distinctly, he has formed a much more correct image of it, and is much more deeply enamoured of its exquisite and divine beauty. He endeavours, as well as he can, to assimilate his own character to this archetype of perfection. But he imitates the work of a divine artist, which can never be equalled. He feels the imperfect success of all his best endeavours; and sees, with grief and affliction, in how many different features the mortal copy falls short of the immortal original. He remembers, with concern and humiliation, how often, from want of attention, from want of judgment, from want of temper, he has, both in words and actions, both in conduct and conversation, violated the exact rules of perfect propriety; and has so far departed from that model, according to which he wished to fashion his own character and conduct†.

* The Christian reader cannot fail to recollect that such a standard is provided for all in the pattern and precepts of the divine Saviour.

† How much more will all this be felt, if the standard in view be that divine law, which extends its requisitions to the thoughts and desires of the heart!

When he directs his attention towards the second standard, indeed, that degree of excellence which his friends and acquaintances have commonly arrived at, he may be sensible of his own superiority; but, as his principal attention is always directed towards the first standard, he is necessarily much more humbled by the one comparison, than he ever can be elated by the other. He is never so elated, as to look down with insolence even upon those who are really below him. He feels so well his own imperfection, he knows so well the difficulty with which he attained his own distant approximation to rectitude, that he cannot regard with contempt the still greater imperfection of other people. Far from insulting over their inferiority, he views it with the most indulgent commiseration; and by his advice as well as example, is at all times willing to promote their further advancement. If, in any particular qualification, they happen to be superior to him, (for who is so perfect as not to have many superiors in many different qualifications?) far from envying their superiority, he, who knows how difficult it is to excel, esteems and honours their excellence, and never fails to bestow upon it the full measure of applause which it deserves. His whole mind, in short, is deeply impressed, his whole behaviour and deportment are distinctly stamped with the character of real modesty; with that of a very moderate estimation of his own merit, and, at the same time, of a full sense of the merit of other people.—*Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ii. 146.

And although there is none of human race, who are not involved in manifold weaknesses and disorders of soul, none who, upon reflection, won't find themselves entangled in many errors and misapprehensions about matters of the greatest importance to the true happiness of life, and in the guilt of manifold crimes

committed against God, and our fellow creatures, on account of which they may justly dread the divine justice, and apprehend some impendent punishments ; yet such is the divine goodness and clemency, with such long suffering and mercy has he continued for many ages, to exercise his gracious providence about weak, corrupted mortals, that such as sincerely love him, and desire, as far as human weakness can go, to serve him with duty and gratitude, need not entirely lose hopes of his favour. Nay, they have some probable ground to expect, that God will be found propitious and placable to such as repent of their sins, and are exerting their utmost endeavours in the pursuit of virtue, and that his infinite wisdom and goodness will find out some method of exercising his mercy toward a guilty world, so as not to impair the authority of his laws, and the sanctity of his moral administration, though human wisdom should never particularly discover it.—*Hutcheson's Introduction to Moral Philosophy*, b. i. chap. iv. § 2.

Few sentiments are more familiar to the human mind than this, that vice deserves punishment, and virtue reward. But, to prevent mistakes, it is necessary to add, that, in strict propriety of speech, our virtue is meritorious with respect to our fellow-creatures only. Considered in his relation to the Supreme Being, man, when he has done his best, is an unprofitable servant. To enter into some particulars upon this subject:—Life is, by all men, accounted a great blessing ; for, in the general intercourse of the world, few things are more valued than that which supports it. Now life is a blessing, which the Deity confers on his creatures gratuitously : we cannot say that our virtue gives us a title to it, or is an adequate return for it. Our reason, conscience, susceptibility of happiness, and capacity for virtue, are all the free

gift of God ; and who can imagine, that there is merit in having received what has been given us ! If we abuse his benefits, we deserve punishment ; if we make a right use of them, (which no man of sense will say that he does,) we do nothing more than what is incumbent on us in consequence of our having received them, and for which our enjoyment of them is more than an adequate recompense. It is to be observed further, that all human virtue is very imperfect ; and that the best man on earth can scarce be said to pass a day, without violating the divine law in thought, word, or deed. There are hardly any human actions, how virtuous soever they may *seem*, and how meritorious soever, with respect to our fellow-creatures, they may *be*, of which the agent, if a man of sense, will not readily acknowledge, that they must, in the sight of the Creator, appear tainted with imperfection ; and that we have always reason to pray, with humility and contrition, that God would pardon what is wrong or wanting even in our best performances. We all know, that criminal habits pervert the understanding, and debase the moral faculty ; and that we have contracted many evil habits, which, with proper attention, we might have avoided, and are of course accountable for those debasements and perversities, which are owing to our inattention, and for the errors and follies thence resulting. Now, since all human excellence is so defective ; since even the best men are so great offenders ; and since the advantages that virtue may enjoy even in this life, are so important, what man is there who can say, that his virtue *entitles* him to receive any other reward from that God, whom he is continually offending ; to whose goodness he is every moment under unspeakable obligations ; and, compared with whose consummate purity, all human attainments are in the proportion of weak-

ness to omnipotence, of finite to infinite, of time to eternity! From the placability of our judge, who knows our frailty, reason, unenlightened by revelation, might perhaps encourage the penitent to hope for pardon; but to pardon a criminal, and to receive him into favour, are different things; and what proportion is there between human virtue, debased as it is with vice and with error, and a state of never ending felicity in the life to come? Can we merit such a reward! We, whose goodness, if we have any, is, even in this world, rewarded beyond what it deserves! These speculations might lead into a labyrinth of perplexity, if it were not for what revelation declares concerning the divine government. It declares, that man may expect, on the performance of certain conditions, not only pardon, but everlasting happiness; not on account of his own merit, which in the sight of God is nothing, but on account of the infinite merits of the Redeemer; who, descending from the height of glory, voluntarily underwent the punishment due to sin, and thus obtained those high privileges, for as many as should comply with the terms announced by him to mankind.—*Beattie's Elements of Moral Science*, ii. 27.

SECTION VI.

THE MEDIATION AND ATONEMENT OF CHRIST.

I consider sacrifices as the basis of all religion; and the death of Abel as the first type of that sacrifice, which forms the ground-work of Christianity.

In whatever way we decide upon this opinion, it affords much room for thought. The greater part of ancient religions instituted human sacrifices; but in this barbarity there was something remarkable, namely, the necessity of a solemn expiation. Nothing, in effect, can obliterate from the soul the idea, that there is a mysterious efficacy in the blood of the innocent, and that heaven and earth are moved by it. Men have always believed, that the just could obtain, in this life or the other, the pardon of the guilty. There are some primitive ideas in the human species, which reappear with more or less disfigurement, in all times, and among all nations. These are the ideas, upon which we cannot grow weary of reflecting; for they assuredly preserve some traces of the lost dignities of our nature.—*De Stael's Germany*, iii. 307.

As to the doctrine of the satisfaction of Christ, it appears that he has done all for us, that one being can do for another, and that it would be a most unjustifiable and narrow way of expressing ourselves, to confine the benefits received from Christ to that of mere example.—*Hartley's Observations on Man*, ii. 357.

That Christ suffered and died as an atonement for the sins of mankind, is a doctrine so constantly and so strongly enforced through every part of the New Testament, that whoever will seriously peruse those writings, and deny that it is there, may with as much reason and truth, after reading the works of Thucydides and Livy, assert that in them no mention is made of any facts relative to the histories of Greece and Rome.—*Soame Jenyns' Works*, iv. 20.

We may know God, without knowing our own miseries; or we may know our own miseries, without knowing God; or we may know both, without knowing the means of obtaining from God the relief of our

miseries. But we cannot know *Jesus Christ*, without the knowledge of God, of our miseries, and of their cure. In as much as *Jesus Christ* is not only God, but he is God under this character, the Healer and Repairer of our miseries.

Thus all they, who seek God without *Jesus Christ*, can never meet with such light in their inquiries as may afford them true satisfaction, or solid use. For either they advance not so far, as to know that there is a God; or, if they do, yet they arrive hereby but at an unprofitable knowledge, because they frame to themselves a method of communicating with God, without a mediator; as ^{without} without a mediator they were capable of knowing him: So that they unavoidably fall either into atheism, or deism, things which the Christian religion does almost equally detest and abhor.

We ought therefore wholly to direct our inquiries to the knowledge of *Jesus Christ*, because it is by him alone that we can pretend to know God, in such a manner as shall be really advantageous to us.

He alone is the true God to us *men*, that is, to miserable and sinful creatures. He is our chief Centre and Supreme Object, in respect of all that we can wish, and all that we can understand. Whoever knows not him, knows nothing either in the order of the world, or in his own nature and condition. For as we know God only by *Jesus Christ*, so 'tis by him alone that we know ourselves.

Without *Jesus Christ*, man is, of necessity, to be considered as lying in vice and misery. With *Jesus Christ*, man appears as released from vice, and redeemed from misery. In him consists all our happiness, and all our virtue, our life, and light, our hope and assurance: Out of him there is no prospect, but of sins and miseries, of darkness and despair; nothing

to be beheld by us, but obscurity and confusion in the divine nature, and in our own.—*Pascal's Thoughts*, p. 149.

It is enough to justify the fitness of any thing to be done, by resolving it into the “wisdom of God,” who has done it; though our short views, and narrow understandings, may utterly incapacitate us to see that wisdom, and to judge rightly of it. We know little of this visible, and nothing at all of the state of that intellectual world, wherein are infinite numbers and degrees of spirits, out of the reach of our ken, or guess; and therefore know not what transactions there were between God and our Saviour, in reference to his kingdom. We know not what need there was to set up a head and chieftain, in opposition to “the prince of this world, the prince of the power of the air,” &c. whereof there are more than obscure intimations in Scripture. And we shall take too much upon us, if we shall call God's wisdom or providence to account, and pertly condemn for needless, all that our weak, and perhaps biassed understanding cannot account for.

Though this general answer be reply enough to the forementioned demand, and such as a rational man, or fair searcher after truth, will acquiesce in; yet, in this particular case, the wisdom and goodness of God has shown itself so visibly to common apprehensions, that it hath furnished us abundantly wherewithal to satisfy the curious and inquisitive; who will not take a blessing, unless they be instructed what need they had of it, and why it was bestowed upon them. The great and many advantages we receive by the coming of Jesus the Messiah, will show, that it was not without need, that he was sent into the world.—*Locke on the Reasonableness of Christianity*; *Works*, vi. 134.

To acknowledge the divine origin of the Christian religion, and refuse to believe that Jesus died for us, and that he hath reconciled us to God, is an inexcusable contradiction, as well of itself, as of the truth which it admitted. It was not possible to express in terms more clear, than revelation hath expressed them, these important doctrines, that men by their sins, had forfeited the favour of God; but that God, out of his infinite love, had promised them by his prophets, that he would send his only Son into the world; that he accordingly came at the appointed time, and, in conformity to the prophecies, suffered, and was put to death; that his sufferings have satisfied the divine justice; that he hath purchased the pardon of sins to all those, who believe in him, and hath rendered them capable of inheriting eternal life; and, lastly, that there is no other way to appease the justice of God, than by faith in his Son.—*Baron Haller's Letters to his Daughter*, let. 12.

God is so far removed from our conceptions; the perfection of his character is so awful; we are so much under the dominion of sensible objects, and he is so little subjected to the senses; that our imperfect nature seems to require aid, in raising itself up to him. We need a stage, on which to rest in our ascent. The indistinctness too, with which we conceive an immaterial, eternal, and infinite Being, concurs with his greatness, to prevent our affections opening towards him with all that ardour which his excellence and our happiness equally require. Christ is “over all, God blessed for ever;” but God (if I may so speak,) veiled of his effulgence. Having taken on him the nature of men, he is not ashamed to call them brethren; and, as brethren, we on our part, can turn towards Him with complacency and confidence. In fancy, we can even behold Him

such as he once was in the days of his flesh ; and when we read the tale of his sufferings, we feel all those emotions and sympathies swelling in our bosoms, which attach us so closely to our own kindred. Recollecting what he was, we can think of what he is without terror ; and in his presence, and under his protection, can approach with joy, even that awful seat, where holiness and justice for ever reside.—*Works of John Bowdler*, ii. 184.

That the Deity loves virtue and hates vice, as a voluptuous man loves riches and hates poverty, not for their own sakes, but for the effects which they tend to produce ; that he loves the one, only because it promotes the happiness of society, which his benevolence prompts him to desire, and that he hates the other only because it occasions the misery of mankind, which the same divine quality renders the object of his aversion ; is not the doctrine of untaught nature, but of an artificial refinement of reason and philosophy. Our untaught natural sentiments all prompt us to believe, that, as perfect virtue is supposed necessary to appear to the Deity as it does to us, for its own sake, and without any further views, the natural and proper object of love and reward, so must vice, of hatred and punishment. That the gods neither resent nor hurt, was the general maxim of all the different sects of the ancient philosophy ; and if by resenting be understood, that violent and disorderly perturbation, which often distracts and confounds the human breast ; or if by hurting be understood, the doing mischief wantonly, and without regard to propriety or justice ; such weakness is undoubtedly unworthy of the divine perfection. But if it be meant, that vice does not appear to the Deity to be, for its own sake, the object of abhorrence and aversion, and what, for its own sake, it is fit and right should be

punished ; the truth of this maxim seems repugnant to some very natural feelings. If we consult our natural sentiments, we are even apt to fear, lest, before the holiness of God, vice should appear to be more worthy of punishment, than the weakness and imperfection of human virtue can even seem to be of reward. Man, when about to appear before a being of infinite perfection, can feel but little confidence in his own merit, or in the imperfect propriety of his own conduct. In the presence of his fellow creatures, he may even justly elevate himself, and may often have reason to think highly of his own character and conduct, compared to the still greater imperfection of theirs. But the case is quite different, when about to appear before his infinite Creator. To such a being he fears, that his littleness and weakness can scarcely ever appear the proper object either of esteem or of reward. But he can easily conceive how the numberless violations of duty, of which he has been guilty, should render him the proper object of aversion and punishment ; and he thinks he can see no reason why the divine indignation should not be let loose, without any restraint, upon so vile an insect as he imagines, that he himself must appear to be. If he would still hope for happiness, he suspects that he cannot demand it from the justice, but that he must entreat it from the mercy of God. Repentance, sorrow, humiliation, contrition, or the thought of his past conduct, seem upon this account the sentiments which become him ; and to be the only means, which he has left for appeasing that wrath, which he knows he has justly provoked. He even distrusts the efficacy of all these, and naturally fears, lest the wisdom of God should not, like the weakness of man, be prevailed upon to spare the crime by the most importunate lamentations of the criminal. Some other intercession,

some other sacrifice, some other atonement, he imagines, must be made for him, beyond what he himself is capable of making, before the purity of the divine justice can be reconciled to his manifold offences. The doctrines of revelation coincide in every respect, with those original anticipations of nature ; and as they teach us how little we can depend upon the imperfection of our own virtue, so they show us at the same time, that the most powerful intercession has been made, that the most dreadful atonement has been paid for our manifold transgressions and iniquities. *
 —*Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 5th edit. London, 1781, p. 158, &c.

The satisfaction, he requireth in conformity to his holiness, is the vindication of his purity, and of his infinite aversion from sin, as by his justice he proportions the suffering requisite for the vindication to the sins deserving. Therefore, upon the foresight of Adam's fall, and thereby not only the loss of the exaltation of himself and posterity to celestial glory, but falling into a sinful state which no creature could expiate, the Son did freely interpose to restore mankind to what they had lost by Adam, and to vindicate the purity of God by sufferings of as much value, as if all mankind had been in eternal misery ; and by Christ's performing what Adam was obliged to perform, by a full implement of the whole will and law of God, and for that end assuming the nature of man.
 —*Dalrymple, Earl of Stair, on the Divine Perfections*.

Upon the same sort of principles, our modern reasoners reject the doctrine of Christ's satisfaction. They cannot conceive how the punishment of one who is innocent should atone for the guilt of another. This

* This passage seems to have been omitted in some later editions of the work.

to them appears to be contrary to the essential justice of the Deity, which ought not to take pleasure in the sufferings of the innocent ; and productive of no good effect, suited to the character which they entertain of that exalted Being.

Here again the temerity of those presumptuous men is notorious. That justice, according to our notions, will not condemn one for the fault of another, is manifest. But if the innocent should consent to suffer for the guilty, where is the violation of justice in permitting it? If the innocent, again, has some great and noble end in view by submitting to that suffering, fit to recompense a thousand-fold the grief borne, where is the injustice of permitting him to put himself in the place of the guilty? If the innocent person is all mercy, all bowels, all compassion, and can sustain the punishment, which the broken-hearted repenting criminal cannot ; what is shocking in the belief, even according to our common notions, that, to comply with the benignity of his nature, he might submit to bear it? It is true we may not see so clearly, why the divine justice should be satisfied for the offence of one, by the sufferings of another ; and that the light of nature would not have led us to discover, that we guilty offenders were to be delivered from punishment by the sufferings of another : but is that a reason why we should not take God's word for it, if he has been pleased to assure us that it is so? Do we know so intimately the nature of his essential justice, as to be certain, that it will not permit him to accept of a vicarious satisfaction? Amongst men, we know, that debt, owing by one, may be discharged by payment made by another ; and are we certain, that, in the court of heaven, one man's obligation to justice may not be cancelled upon another's voluntary fulfilling of it? He little thinks on the unmeasur-

able difference, that is between the narrowness of the human understanding, and the immensity of the divine, who dares rest on such conclusions.—*President Forbes's Reflections on Incredulity.*

WISDOM OF THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION.—In the work of man's redemption, there are some footsteps of divine wisdom so conspicuous, that men of ordinary parts discover them. But some parts of this work are so sublime, which are called the depths of God, and contain so much of the wisdom of God in a mystery, that human understandings are not able to handle so abstruse a subject: it requiring that a man should know, in a great measure, the nature of spirits and of the Father of them, God himself; likewise of the will, intellect, &c. as also of the soul of man; Adam's state in paradise, as also what influence his fall had on posterity; and the nature of God's natural and vindictive justice; the ends of God's inflicting punishment; the unparalleled person of Christ; the qualifications requisite for his being our Redeemer; the conditions God made with man, in respect both of works and grace; God's decrees with respect to a future state, the secret and powerful effects of grace, and how the Spirit of God influences men's souls, which he converts and sanctifies to glory. I say, there are so many things to be considered, to treat of Christ's redemption, that we may say with St. Paul, "who is sufficient for these things?" So that, it being beyond the reach of human capacity, we have the more reason to admire the wisdom of it. Nor is it a less stupendous token of his wisdom to reconcile his inflexible justice, and his exuberant mercy; all the problems of Diophantus, Alexandrinus, &c. requiring not so much attention to a greater number of propositions and congruities, at once to make them subser-

vient to the same ends, as the problem propounded by the infinite goodness of God to his divine wisdom, viz, "the redemption of lost and perverse mankind, upon the terms laid down in the gospel," which at once promote God's glory and man's felicity.—*Hon. Robert Boyle's Theological Works.*

The plan of redemption, adopted by God, is perfectly consonant to the inclinations most prevalent in the heart of man. It operates both on his hopes and fears: without hope, malice would carry itself to the last extremity; without fear, the passions would know no bounds. Fear is excited, by the severity with which the mediator of men hath felt the effects of the hatred, that God hath for sin. These terrible effects of the hatred of God to sin, must justify the divine purity in the eyes of all intelligent beings. They sufficiently prove the abhorrence of the just Judge of the universe of evil, and that he could not pardon the sinner without chastisement. This proceeding was likewise necessary to reconcile the rights of justice with those of mercy; that the one might be satisfied, without prejudice to the other. The minds of men must be seized with a rational fear, when they perceive that the punishment of their faults was inevitable, and that it fell with so great violence upon him who had devoted himself a sacrifice for them, and who, though fortified by the divinity that was within him, felt, nevertheless, so great inquietude for the sins of others. Must they not tremble to fall into the hands of the living God, who, in respect to sin, is 'a fire which devours and which consumes; and who spared not the sins of men in the person of his beloved Son.'

But the effect of this fear is rendered still more efficacious, by the hopes which the same object creates in our souls. God is appeased: he considers sin as

blotted out : his grace displays in us those happy influences, which all those experience, who do not voluntarily reject them. The Saviour himself, who hath discharged our debt, and paid our ransom, promises us his assistance. He is gone up into heaven, where he has prepared mansions for those who follow Him. The designs of God towards us have been revealed ; the way, which will conduct us to happiness, is known ; conditions have been proposed, and the means of conforming ourselves to the ordinances of God have been communicated. This is that conformity, which will render us acceptable to him ; and his favour is true happiness.—*Baron Haller's Letters to his Daughter*, let. 13.

The wonderful wisdom of God, in contriving and ordering the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ, is manifested in these particulars among others :—

1. Though he made man the eminentest of all his visible creatures, for a most eminent manifestation of his power and glory, and to be partaker of everlasting blessedness, and yet in his eternal counsel resolved to leave him in the hands of his own liberty, and did most certainly foresee that he would fall, yet he did substitute and provide even from the same eternity, a means whereby he might restore the honour and glory of the Creator, and his creature to the blessedness and the vision of his creation.
2. That he so ordered the means of man's redemption, that a greater glory came even by that redemption, than if man had never fallen ; and a greater benefit to mankind ; for the latter is apparent, that if there had been no mediator sent, the least sin, that any of the sons of men had committed, had been inexorably fatal to them, without any means of pardon ; and as Adam, though in his full liberty and power, was misled by temptation, so might he have been, or any of his posterity,

though he had stood that shock ; which is now admirably provided against by the satisfaction of Christ Jesus : and as thus it is better with the children of man, so the glory of God is wonderfully advanced by it ; for, if man had stood in his innocence, God had had only the glory of his justice in rewarding him ; or if he had fallen, the glory of his justice in punishing him : but there had been no room for that glorious attribute of his mercy in forgiving, without violation to his purity, truth, and justice, that glorious attribute by which he so often proclaimeth himself, Exodus xxiv. 6. “ The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and “ gracious, long suffering, abundant in goodness and “ truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no “ means clear the guilty.” 3. That he so wonderfully ordered the redemption of man, that all his attributes were preserved inviolable ; his truth, “ the day “ thou eatest thereof thou shalt die ;” his justice, yet his mercy : his love to his creatures, yet his hatred to sin : his Son shall die to satisfy his truth and justice, yet the sinner shall live to satisfy his mercy : the sin shall be punished to justify his purity, yet his creature shall be saved to manifest his love and goodness ; and thus his wisdom over-ruled sin, the worst of evils, to the improvement of his glory, and the good of his creatures. 4. His wisdom is manifested in this, that by the redemption of man, all those ways of his administration, before the coming of Christ, do now appear to be excellently ordered to the redemption of men, and the making of it the more effectual ; the giving of a severe and yet most just law, which was impossible for us to fulfil, shews us the wretchedness of our condition ; our inability to fulfil what was just in God to require, shews us the necessity of a Saviour, drives us to him, and makes this city of refuge grate-

ful and acceptable, and makes us set a value upon that mercy, which so opportunely and mercifully provided a sacrifice for us in the blood of Christ, and a righteousness for us in the mercies of Christ, and a mediator for us in the intercession of Christ: and by this means also all those sacrifices, and ceremonies, and observations enjoined in the Levitical law, which carried not in themselves a clear reason of their institution, are now, by the sending of Christ, rendered significant. 5. The wisdom of God is magnified and advanced in this, in fulfilling the prophecies of the sending the Messias to satisfy for the sins of mankind, against all the oppositions, and casualties, and contingencies, that without an over-ruling wisdom and guidance might have disappointed it; and this done in that perfection, that not one circumstance of time, place, person, concomitants, should or did fail in it, and so bearing witness to the infinite truth, power, and wisdom of God, in bringing about his counsels, in their perfection touching this great business of the redemption of man, which was the very end why he was created and placed upon the earth; and, managing the villany of men, and the craft and malice of Satan, to bring about the greatest blessing that was, or could be, provided for mankind, besides, and above, and against the intention of the instrument, Acts ii. 23. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." 6. The unsearchable wisdom of God is manifested, in that he provided such a Mediator, that was fit for so great a work: had all the world consulted that God must suffer, it had been impossible, and had all the world contributed that any man, or all the men in the world should have been a satisfactory sacrifice for any one sin, it had been deficient. Here is then the wonder-

ful counsel of the most high God, the sacrifice that is appointed shall be so ordered, that God and man shall be conjoined in one person, that so as man he might become a sacrifice for sin, and as God that he might give a value to the sacrifice. And this is the great, mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh.—

Sir Matthew Hale's Contemplations, ii. 144.

An universal tradition teaches us, that man was created in a more perfect state, than that in which he at present exists, and that there has been a fall. This tradition is confirmed by the opinion of the philosophers of all ages and of all countries, who have never been able to reconcile their ideas on the subject of moral man, without supposing a primitive state of perfection, from which human nature afterwards fell by its own fault. If man was created, he was created for some end or other; consequently, being created perfect, the end for which he was destined could not be otherwise than perfect. But has the final cause of man been changed by his fall? No; since man has not been created anew: No; since the human race has not been exterminated to make room for another. Man therefore, though he has become mortal and imperfect, through his disobedience, is still destined for immortal and perfect ends. But how shall he attain these ends in his present state of imperfection? This he can no longer accomplish by his own energy, for the same reason that a sick man is incapable of raising himself to that elevation of ideas, to which a person in health is able to soar. There is therefore a disproportion between the power, and the weight to be raised by that power: here we already perceive the necessity of succour or of a redemption.

“This kind of reasoning,” it may be said, “will apply to the first man; but as for us we are capa-

“ ble of attaining the ends of our destination. What “ injustice and absurdity to imagine that we shall all “ be punished for the fault of our first parent ?” Without pretending to decide in this place whether God is right or wrong, in making us sureties for one another, all that we know, and all that is necessary for us to know at present is, that such a law exists. We know, that the innocent son universally suffers the punishment due the guilty father ; that this law is so interwoven in the principles of things, as to hold good even in the physical order of the universe. When an infant comes into the world diseased from head to foot from its father’s excesses, why do you not complain of the injustice of nature ? for what has this little innocent done, that it should endure the punishment of another’s vices ? Well then, the diseases of the soul are perpetuated like those of the body ; and man is punished, in his remotest posterity, for the fault, which introduced into his nature the first leaven of sin. The fall then being attested by general tradition, and by the transmission or generation of evil both moral and physical ; while on the other hand, the ends for which man was designed, have remained as perfect as before his disobedience, though man himself has degenerated ; it follows, that a redemption, or any expedient to enable man to fulfil those ends, is a natural consequence of the state into which human nature has fallen. The necessity of redemption being once admitted, let us seek the order in which it may be found. This order may be taken either in man or above man: 1. In man. In order to suppose a redemption, the price must be at least equivalent to the thing to be redeemed. Now, how is it to be imagined, that imperfect and mortal man could set about regaining a perfect and immortal end ? How could man, partaking himself of the primeval sin,

make satisfaction as well for the portion of guilt which belongs to himself, as for that which concerns the rest of his race? Would not such self devotion require a kind of love and virtue superior to human nature? Heaven seems purposely to have suffered four thousand years to elapse, from the fall to the redemption, to allow men time to judge of themselves, how very inadequate were their degraded virtues for such a sacrifice. We have no alternative, then, but the second supposition; namely, that the redemption could have proceeded only from a Being superior to man. Let us examine if it could have been accomplished by any of the intermediate beings between him and God. What should have inspired the angels with that unbounded love to man, which the mystery of the cross presupposes? We shall observe besides, that the most exalted of the created spirits would not have possessed strength sufficient for the stupendous task. We could not then have any other Redeemer, than one of the three persons existing from all eternity; and, among these three persons of the Godhead, it is obvious, that the Son alone, from his very nature, must accomplish the great work of salvation. Love, which binds together all the parts of the universe, the middle which unites the extremes, the vivifying principle of nature, He alone was capable of reconciling God with man. This second Adam came; man according to the flesh, yet God by his essence. He was born of a virgin, that he might not partake of original sin, but be a victim "without spot and without blemish." He received life in a stable, in the lowest of human conditions, because we had fallen through pride. Here commences the depth of the mystery; man feels an awful emotion, and the scene closes. Thus the end; for which we were destined, before the disobedience of

our first parents, is still pointed out to us, but the way to attain it is no longer the same. Adam in a state of innocence would have reached it by flowery paths : all nature has undergone a change since the fault of our general father ; and redemption was not designed to produce a new creation, but to confer final salvation on the old one. Every thing, therefore, has remained degenerate with man ; and this sovereign of the universe, who, created immortal, was destined to be exalted without any change of existence, to the felicity of the celestial powers, cannot now enjoy the presence of God, till, in the language of St. Chrysostom, he has passed through *the deserts of the tomb*. His soul has been rescued from final destruction by the redemption ; but his body, combining with the frailty natural to matter, the weakness consequent on sin, undergoes the primitive sentence in its utmost extent : he falls, he perishes, he sinks into corruption.

We venture to presume, that, if there be any thing clear in metaphysics it is the chain of this reasoning. Here is no wresting of words ; here are no divisions and subdivisions, no obscure and barbarous terms. Christianity is not made up of these things, as the sarcasms of infidelity would fain lead us to imagine. To the poor in spirit the gospel has been preached, and by the poor in spirit it has been heard : it is the plainest book that exists. Its doctrine has not its seat in the head, but in the heart ; it teaches not the art of disputation, but the way to lead a virtuous life ; nevertheless it is not without its secrets. What is truly ineffable in Scripture, is the continual mixture of the profoundest mysteries and extreme simplicity, characters whence spring the divine and the sublime. We ought not to be surprised, that the book of Jesus Christ should speak so eloquently.

Such, moreover, are the truths of our religion, notwithstanding their freedom from scientific parade, that the admission of a single point immediately compels you to admit all the rest. Nay more, if you hope to escape by denying the principle, as for instance, original sin, you will soon, driven from consequence to consequence, be obliged to precipitate yourself into the abyss of atheism; the moment you acknowledge a God, our holy religion makes its way with all its doctrines, as Clarke and Pascal have observed. This in our opinion is one of the strongest evidences in favour of Christianity.—*Chateaubriand's Beauties of Christianity*, i. 31.

SECTION VII.

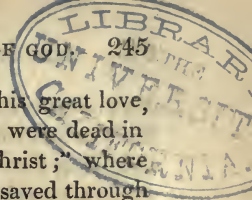
SALVATION BY THE GRACE OF GOD.

SALVATION IS FROM GOD.—I believe many are saved, who, to man, seem reprobated; and many are reprobated, who, in the opinion and sentence of man, stand elected: There will appear, at the last day, strange and unexpected examples both of his justice and his mercy; and, therefore, to define either, is folly in man, and insolency even in devils; those acute and subtle spirits, in all their sagacity, can hardly divine who shall be saved, which if they could prognostick, their labour was at an end, nor need they compass the earth, seeking whom they may devour. The number of those who pretend unto salvation, and those infinite swarms who think to pass through the

eye of this needle, have much amazed me. That name and compellation of "little flock," doth not comfort, but deject my devotion, especially when I reflect upon mine own unworthiness, wherein, according to my humble apprehensions, I am below them, below them all. That, which was the cause of my election, I hold to be the cause of my salvation, which was the mercy and beneplacit of God, before I was, or the foundation of the world.—*Brown's Religio Medici.*

Could humility teach others, as it hath instructed me, to contemplate the infinite and incomprehensible distance betwixt the Creator and the creature; or did we seriously perpend that one simile of St. Paul, "shall the vessel say to the potter, why hast thou made me thus?" it would prevent those arrogant disputes of reason, nor would we argue the definite sentence of God, either to heaven or hell. Men, that live according to the right rule and law of reason, live but in their own kind, as beasts do in theirs; who justly obey the prescript of their natures, and therefore cannot reasonably demand a reward of their actions, as only obeying the natural dictates of their reason. It will, therefore, and must at last appear, that all salvation is through Christ; which verity, I fear, these great examples of virtue (the ancient worthies) must confirm and make it good, how the perfectest actions of earth have no title or claim unto heaven.—*Brown's Religio Medici.*

Nothing can be more contrary to the covenant of grace, and to the way of salvation inculcated in the gospel, wherein all glorying or boasting of the creature, attributing any part of its salvation to itself, is excluded. "Where is boasting then? it is excluded; by what law? of works? nay but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude, (saith the apostle,) that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law."



"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love, wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sin, hath quickened us together with Christ;" where it is twice repeated, "by grace ye are saved through faith, not of works, lest any man should boast." Yea, boasting is so far excluded, that man cannot boast of faith, as it is his part of the covenant of grace, for it is said, "by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." What could be more said to exclude works from man's part of the covenant of grace, not only that there cannot be an equivalent cause deserving glory, but not so much as the terms upon which glory was to be freely given? For it is expressly said, that "we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God hath before ordained," or prepared, "that we should walk in them." And God hath not predestinated man to salvation for their works foreseen or performed. "For whom he did foresee, them he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son;" which image is holiness, which is not the cause, but the end and effect of predestination. Good works, indeed, are *via regni*, but not *causa regnandi*; and they are the evidences of true and saving faith, to be diligently followed; not only by reason of the indispensable law and duty, anterior in order to any covenant, but as the means to evidence true grace, and give solid peace; and therefore it is said, "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life," and that "the kingdom of God is taken by violence, and the violent enter it by force," which doth import no more than the way to the kingdom. And where it is said, "blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life," it doth not import right by merit, (the word being *ἐξουσία ἐπὶ τὸ ζῆλον ζωῆς*), so that works can no

more properly be called right, than the evidence of lands or inheritance are called the rights thereof, as signifying the same; and, therefore, the explicatory words are subjoined, and “may enter in through the gates of the city.”—*Dalrymple, Earl of Stair, on the Divine Perfections.*

NATURE OF GRACE.—I take grace to be the whole complex of such real motives (as a solid account may be given of them) that incline a man to virtue and piety; and are set on foot by God’s particular grace and favour, to bring that work to pass. The whole concatenation of all the intervening accidents to work this good effect in him; and that were ranged and disposed from all eternity by God’s particular goodness and providence for his salvation, and without which he had inevitably been damned. This chain of causes ordered by God to produce this effect, I understand to be grace.—*Sir Kenelm Digby’s Annotations to Brown’s Religio Medici.*

We are ignorant of a great number of things; we know not, in particular, the operation of the grace of God, nor how it enlightens the mind. No person can sincerely devote himself to the Supreme Being without perceiving the emotions of his grace. “If a man keep my commandments,” says our Saviour, “he will *perceive* that I am come from God.” It is the influence of his grace, which excites in us good desires; which represents to us our unworthiness, and which animates our souls with an ardent desire of procuring the favour of God.—*Baron Haller’s Letters to his Daughter*, let. 14.

MAN’S NEED OF SPIRITUAL ASSISTANCE.—Those, whom God has inspired with the grace of religion in their hearts and affections, are most en-

tirely convinced, and most completely blessed. But as for those, who have not yet attained it, we have no way of recommending it to them, but by reason and argument; waiting till God shall please to imprint an inward feeling of it on their hearts; without which, all faith, as it is only the conviction of the understanding, is unprofitable to salvation.—*Pascal's Thoughts.*

In this manner it has been my earnest endeavour to shew the authenticity and excellence of the Holy Scriptures, and the truth of the Christian religion. But, as there is such debility in the mind of man, and a pride of heart which produces these doubts and difficulties, these *stumbling blocks and rocks of offence*, let us seek remedy in that excellent prayer of our church, in which we invoke the Deity, “that it may please him to give to all his people increase of grace to hear meekly his word, to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit.” Whoever will in this wise read, learn, and inwardly digest the Holy Scriptures, cannot fail of being a Christian.—*Bryant on the Authenticity of Scripture, 255.*

But we ought always to keep this in our thoughts, that we entirely depend on God; that all the goods, either of mind or body, and all our virtues, have been derived from him, and must be preserved or increased by his gracious providence; and since every good temper must always extend its views abroad, studiously pursuing the happiness of others, which also entirely depends on the will of God, and cannot be insured by human power, there can be no other stable foundation of tranquillity and joy, than a constant trust in the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, by which we commit to him ourselves, our friends, and the whole universe, persuaded that he will order all things well. The schoolmen, therefore, justly called,

God the supreme object of happiness, or the *supreme objective good*, from the knowledge and love of whom, with the hopes of being favoured by him, our supreme happiness must arise.—*Hutcheson's Moral Philosophy*, b. i. chap. ii. § 12.

To these I must add one advantage more, by Jesus Christ, and that is the promise of assistance. If we do what we can, he will give us his Spirit to help us to do what, and how we should. It will be idle for us, who know not how our own spirits move and act us, to ask in what manner the Spirit of God shall work upon us. The wisdom, that accompanies that Spirit, knows better than we, how we are made, and how to work upon us. If a wise man knows how to prevail on his child, to bring him to what he desires, can we suspect that the Spirit and wisdom of God should fail in it, though we perceive or comprehend not the ways of his operation? Christ has promised it, who is faithful and just; and we cannot doubt of the performance. It is not requisite, on this occasion, for the enhancing of this benefit, to enlarge on the frailty of our minds, and weakness of our constitution, how liable to mistakes, how apt to go astray, and how easily to be turned out of the paths of virtue. If any one needs go beyond himself, and the testimony of his own conscience, in this point; if he feels not his own errors and passions always tempting, and often prevailing, against the strict rules of his duty, he need but look abroad into any stage of the world, to be convinced. To a man under the difficulties of his nature, beset with temptations, and hedged in with prevailing customs, it is no small encouragement to set himself seriously on the courses of virtue, and practice of true religion, that he is, from a sure hand, and an almighty arm, promised assistance to support and carry him through.—*Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity, Works*, vi. 151.

What excuse can they have for pretending to judge, that the merciful and beneficent Spirit of God does not work upon the spirits of men? From their proper experience they can draw no observation, as they have locked out all regard for the Deity from their hearts; and what passes in the spirits of other men they can have no knowledge of, nor indeed any idea, as they have suffered no such transactions to take place in their own.

Philosophers have talked much of action and reaction in matter, and imagine they understand what they say; what should hinder them to believe that there may be such a thing as action and reaction between spirits, even between the infinitely perfect Spirit and the spirits of finite men? If gratitude observed in a dog produces some regard and kindness in the mind of his master, why may not the gratitude, the warmth of the heart of man, work some similar effect in the all-seeing mind? and who dare presume to say, that it may not act on, and comfort the spirit of man in return? If that beneficent and all-powerful Spirit does not shew his kindness in bestowing wealth, and power, and fading pleasures, it is because they are not real goods; because they are not the object of the heart and wishes of the party favoured; and because, in place of doing him real good, they might call off the affections from that exercise wherein his true felicity consists. And this is so true, that crosses, disappointments, and distresses, may justly be considered as acts of the greatest kindness, when they tend to recal the straying mind from vanity, and to fix it on its proper object.—*President Forbes's Reflections on Incredulity.*

“No man,” says Christ, (referring to John vi. 44.) “can believe the doctrines, or obey the precepts, which I teach, except he is enabled by the assistance

and grace of God:" by which we are not to understand any sudden, irresistible impulse, as some enthusiasts would persuade us; but, except God shall be pleased to dispose his heart, and also the circumstances of his situation, in such a manner as to draw him into the right road of faith and obedience. This is the declaration of Christ, and the doctrine universally enforced by all the writers of the New Testament, 2 Cor. iii. 5. Phil. ii. 13. This is the constant language of the Scriptures; in which we are every where exhorted to seek, to depend on, to hope for, and to pray for this divine influence on our thoughts and actions, as necessary to our thinking any thing right, or performing any thing good; and yet we are constantly considered, by the whole tenor of those writings, as free agents, possessed of perfect liberty to do good or evil, and as such we are instructed, admonished, tempted by rewards, and threatened with punishments. How contradictory soever these two propositions may seem, they are both undoubtedly true. Of the first we cannot fail being convinced by reason, nor of the latter by experience. Reason assures us, that no creature can think or act independent of his Creator, in whom he lives, and moves, and has his being, and from whom he receives power to think or act at all; and it seems indeed impossible, that a Creator, however omnipotent, should bestow on his creatures such a degree of freedom, as to make them independent of himself; for he must infuse into their original frame some disposition, good or bad; he must give them reason superior to their passions, or passions uncontrolled by their reason; he must endow them with a greater or less degree of wisdom or folly; he must place them within or beyond the reach of temptations, and within the view of virtuous or vicious examples. All these circumstances must proceed from his dispensation, and from these their elec-

tion and consequent conduct must be derived. Of the latter, which is, that we are possessed of full liberty to choose good or evil, to do, or forbear doing, any action, every moment's experience assures us with equal certainty. This is not a matter of argument, but of feeling; and we can no more doubt of our being possessed of this power, than of our sight, hearing, or any of our corporeal senses. How these two contradictory propositions can be reconciled, is above the reach of our comprehensions; and is but another mark, added to many, of their weakness and imperfection. We have no faculties which are able to solve this difficulty, and therefore ought to leave it to that omniscient Being who framed, and is alone acquainted with, the composition of the human mind. Each of these opinions has been supported by different sects of philosophers, with equal warmth; but it is remarkable, that the Christian is the only religious or moral institution, which ever ventured to assert the truth of them both; which, as they are both undoubtedly true, seems no inconsiderable proof of the supernatural information and authority of that dispensation.—*Soame Jenyns' Works*, iv. 218.

SECTION VIII.

REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION.

NATURE AND NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE.—As the two great sources of all sin, are pride and negligence, so God has been pleased to disclose two of his attributes for their cure, his mercy, and his justice. The office and effect of his justice is, to abase and mortify our pride; and the office and effect of his

mercy is, to prevail on our negligence, and excite us to good works. *The goodness of God leadeth to repentance.* And; *let us repent, (say the Ninevites) and see if He will not have mercy on us.* Thus the consideration of the Divine mercy is so far from being an encouragement to sloth and remissness, that it is the greatest spur to industry and action: And instead of saying; “If our God were not a merciful God, we ought to bend our utmost endeavours towards the fulfilling of his commands, it is rational to say, because we serve a God of mercy and pity, therefore we ought to labour with all our strength to yield him an acceptable service.”—*M. Pascal's Thoughts*, p. 229.

It is necessary, that, at the moments, too frequent, when the chain, which unites us to the Supreme Being would escape from our grasp, the hope of again seizing it should remain with us: it is then, to succour our weak faith, that we see in the gospel that idea at once so excellent and new, that of repentance, and the promises that are annexed to it. This noble idea, absolutely belonging to Christianity, prevents our relation with the Deity from being destroyed as soon as it is perceived; the culprit may still hope for the favour of God, and, after contrition, confide in Him. Human nature, that singular connection of the spirit with matter, of strength with weakness, of reason with the imagination, persuasion with doubt, and will with uncertainty, necessarily requires a legislation appropriated to a constitution so extraordinary: man, in his most improved state, resembles an infant, who attempts to walk, and falls, rises, and falls again; and he would soon be lost to morality, if, after his first fault, he had not any hope of repairing it; under a similar point of view, the idea of repentance is one of the most philosophical which the gospel contains.—*Necker's Religious Opinions*, p. 433.

Perfect innocence is not the portion of mortality. Even in worthy persons, the judgment may err ; and in the exercise of right affections, the heart may wander. In youth, a passion may break its bounds, and, for a moment lay waste the soul. Remorse is felt. Under its severe and awful pressure, the soul returns to God, and melts in penitential sorrow. The peace, which begins to dawn, is a token of the divine compassion. The fruits of this exercise are a lively sense of the danger of guilt, the humbleness of mind which becomes an imperfect creature, and sympathy with those who are in the same imperfect state.—*Lord Kames on the Culture of the Heart.*

Repentance, by this we may plainly see, is another new moral duty strenuously insisted on by this religion, and by no other, because absolutely necessary to the accomplishment of its end ; for this alone can purge us from those transgressions, from which we cannot be totally exempted in this state of trial and temptation ; and purify us from that depravity in our nature, which renders us incapable of attaining this end. Here also we may learn, that no repentance can remove this incapacity, but such as entirely changes the nature and disposition of the offender ; which, in the language of Scripture, is called “ being born again.” Mere contrition for past crimes, nor even the pardon of them, cannot effect this, unless it operates to their entire conversion, or new birth, as it is properly and emphatically named ; for sorrow can no more purify a mind corrupted by a long continuance in vicious habits, than it can restore health to a body distempered by a long course of vice and intemperance. Hence also every one, who is in the least acquainted with himself, may judge of the reasonableness of the hope that is in him, and of his situation in a future state, by that of his present. If he feels in himself a temper proud, turbulent, vindictive, and

malevolent, and a violent attachment to the pleasures and business of the world, he may be assured that he must be excluded from the kingdom of heaven; not only, because his conduct can merit no such reward, but because, if admitted, he would find there no object satisfactory to his passions, inclinations, and pursuits; and therefore could only disturb the happiness of others, without enjoying any share of it himself.—*Soame Jenyns' Works*, iv. 50.

Repentance, however difficult to be practised, is, if it be explained without superstition, easily understood. *Repentance is the relinquishment of any practice, from the conviction that it has offended God.* Sorrow, and fear, and anxiety, are properly not parts, but adjuncts of repentance; yet they are too closely connected with it to be easily separated; for they not only mark its sincerity, but promote its efficacy. No man commits any act of negligence or obstinacy; by which his safety or happiness in this world is endangered, without feeling the pungency of remorse. He who is fully convinced, that he suffers by his own failure, can never forbear to trace back his miscarriage to its first cause, to image to himself a contrary behaviour, and to form involuntary resolutions against the like fault, even when he knows that he shall never again have the power of committing it. Danger considered as imminent, naturally produces such trepidations of impatience, as leave all human means of safety behind them: he that hath once caught an alarm of terror, is every moment seized with useless anxieties, adding one security to another; trembling, with sudden doubts, and distracted by the perpetual occurrence of new expedients. If, therefore, he, whose crimes have deprived him of the favour of God, can reflect upon his conduct without disturbance, or can at will banish the reflection; if he, who

considers himself as suspended over the abyss of eternal perdition only by the thread of life, which must soon part by its own weakness, and which the wing of every minute may divide, can cast his eyes round him without shuddering with horror, or panting with security; what can he judge of himself, but that he is not yet awakened to sufficient conviction, since every loss is more lamented than the loss of the divine favour, and every danger more dreaded than the danger of final condemnation?

Retirement from the cares and pleasures of the world has been often recommended as useful to repentance. This at least is evident, that every one retires, whenever ratiocination and recollection are required on other occasions: and surely the retrospect of life, the disentanglement of actions complicated with innumerable circumstances, and diffused in various relations, the discovery of the primary movements of the heart, and the extirpation of lusts and appetites deeply rooted and widely spread, may be allowed to demand some secession from sport, and noise, and business, and folly. Some suspension of common affairs, some pause of temporal pain and pleasure, is doubtless necessary to him that deliberates for eternity, who is forming the only plan in which miscarriage cannot be repaired, and examining the only question in which mistake cannot be rectified.

Austerities and mortifications are means, by which the mind is invigorated and roused, by which the attractions of pleasure are interrupted, and the chains of sensuality are broken. It is observed by one of the fathers, that *he who restrains himself in the use of things lawful, will never encroach upon things forbidden*. Abstinence, if nothing more, is, at least, a cautious retreat from the utmost verge of permission,

and confers that security, which cannot be reasonably hoped by him, that dares always to hover over the precipice of destruction, or delights to approach the pleasures which he knows it fatal to partake. Austerity is the proper antidote to indulgence ; the diseases of mind, as well as body, are cured by contraries, and to contraries we should readily have recourse, if we dreaded guilt as we dread pain.

The completion and sum of repentance is a change of life. That sorrow which dictates no caution, that fear which does not quicken our escape, that austerity which fails to rectify our affections, are vain and unavailing. But sorrow and terror must naturally precede reformation ; for what other cause can produce it? He, therefore, that feels himself alarmed by his conscience, anxious for the attainment of a better state, and afflicted by the memory of his past faults, may justly conclude, that the great work of repentance is begun, and hope by retirement and prayer, the natural and religious means of strengthening his conviction, to impress upon his mind such a sense of the divine presence, as may overpower the blandishments of secular delights, and enable him to advance from one degree of holiness to another, till death shall set him free from doubt and contest, misery and temptation.

What better can we do, than prostrate fall
Before him reverent ; and there confess
Humbly our faults, and pardon beg ; with tears
Watering the ground, and with our sighs the air
Frequenting, sent from hearts contrite ; in sign
Of sorrow unfeigned, and humiliation meek ?

—*Dr. Samuel Johnson, Rambler, No. 110.*

MEANS OF CONVERSION.—the Scripture saith expressly, that the natural man cannot know the things of God, because they are spiritually discerned. Therefore man by nature wants that sense to discern with. Grace is the new creature, and regeneration the new birth. Therefore in regeneration God must give a new sense. By nature he hath given five senses, and fitted the objects with sensible qualities suited to them all. These were not necessary to man: God might have given fewer, or added more, and fitted qualities for them. May he not then give a new sense for spiritual things? His word sheweth he doth so, which derogates nothing from the word, wherein are the qualities fitted for that sense. It does not derogate from the excellency of the natural light, that it cannot work upon a blind man, or that it does require the sense of sight. The word of God doth not only excite and promote grace after conversion, but is a chief mean to prepare the way for conversion, containing not only supernatural light by revelation, but reviving and perfecting natural light, manifesting the divine perfections, the celestial glory, the way to attain it, the beauty of holiness, and the dreadful consequences thereof; and so looseth the mind from that cleaving to sin that makes the offer of grace and mercy to be despised and rejected. But it is not sufficient to turn the soul to God by conversion. A virtuous heathen by the light of nature may see the deformity of, and may hate gross vice, and may turn from it to that which is comely and convenient for mankind; but can never turn to God to make him the last end. The Scripture may much more easily convince, but not convert by itself; but as it hath the qualities suitable to make impressions upon the supernatural sense and relish of spiritual things, it discovers not only the pollutions of the world, but those more subtile sins, that heathens never perceive; such as, setting

the common interest of mankind above the interest of God ; the want of the love and delight in God, and of the dependence upon him, and attributing all good things to him. So the ingrafted word must be in its proper stock, in its own spiritual sense.—*Dalrymple, Earl of Stair, on the Divine Perfections.*

It is certain, that the knowledge of God's mysteries mortifieth in us all worldly joy, and maketh us to conceive horrible bitterness against worldly impiety : such is the vehement zeal, that the spirit of God worketh in our bowels.—*Lord Napier of Merchiston on the Apocalypse.*

I do conceive, that the entering into the covenant of grace may be in the way of adoration thus : “ My God, I do believe that thou delightest not in the death of sinners, but rather, that they should repent and live in thy favour eternally, who feel sin to be a burden, and do not cleave to any known sin, but betake themselves to thee to be delivered from it, and to become thy servants, trusting in thee for all things necessary for holiness and happiness. I am sensible of the bondage of my sin, and that I am not able to free myself from that bondage ; yet I believe thou hast offered to enable me, and do humbly accept thy offer, purchased through Christ the Mediator, and do resign myself to be directed by thy Holy Spirit in the way of happiness.”—*Dalrymple, Earl of Stair, on the Divine Perfections.*

Might we but see a miracle, say some men, how gladly would we become converts? They could not speak in this manner, did they understand what conversion means. They imagine, that nothing else is requisite to this work, but the bare acknowledgment of God ; and that his adoration and service consists only in the paying him certain verbal addresses, little different from those which the heathens used towards

their idols. True conversion is to abase, and, as it were, to annihilate ourselves, before this great and sovereign Being, whom we have so often provoked, and who every moment may, without the least injustice, destroy us: 'Tis to acknowledge, that we can do nothing without his aid, and that we have merited nothing from him but his wrath: 'Tis to know, that there's an invincible opposition between God and ourselves; and that, without the benefit of a mediator, there could be no transaction or intercourse between us.

Never think it strange, that illiterate persons should believe without reasoning. God inspires them with the love of his justice, and with the hatred of themselves. 'Tis he that inclines their hearts to believe. No man ever believes with a true and saving faith, unless God inclines his heart: and no man, when God inclines his heart, can refrain from thus believing. Of this *David* was sensible when he prayed, *Inclina cor meum, Deus, in testimonia tua.*—*Pascal's Thoughts*, p. 46.

REGENERATION. — Conversion and regeneration, when accurately considered, are distinct; for conversion is wrought by that inclination given of God to accept the offer of grace, for thereby the soul is no more addicted to sin; but regeneration is the infusing of the habits of grace, the pardon of sin, justification or holding of the believer as just, and thereby reconciling with him and adopting him as a son, which are God's part of the covenant of grace, and are always done together; and the future blessings of the covenant for increasing grace, giving perseverance, exciting repentance, and renewing pardon, direction, protection, and glory, are not parts but effects of the covenant of grace, proceeding from God's bounty and

faithfulness, and from his engagement in the covenant of grace to give these things, which promise us a part of the new covenant.—*Dalrymple, Earl of Stair, on the Divine Perfections.*

These white garments are not only our mortified flesh and regenerate bodies ; but even under the term of garments, *synecdochice* expressed, is meant that universal purity both of body and soul, that we obtain, being washed by the innocent blood of Christ Jesus, as is proved by those who are said to have washed their robes, and made the same white in the blood of the Lamb Christ Jesus ; and we know by the Christian truth, that not particularly our robes, yea, not our flesh only, but universally, both in body and soul, we are washed in that blood, and obtain full remission of all our sins.—*Lord Napier of Merchiston on the Apocalypse.*

I conceive justification to be God's holding and reputed the believer to be as if he were entirely just, notwithstanding the remainder of sin, seeing he is become an adversary to sin, and so may say with Paul, "not I, but sin that dwelleth in me." In which sense only it can be said, that "God seeth no iniquity in Jacob, nor sin in Israel," and that "he that is born of God cannot sin;" seeing the indelible habits of grace do ever continue in him, which is called the seed of God. Though forgiveness of sins past at regeneration purge him and make him innocent, yet thereby alone he cannot be accounted just, because the sinful inclinations remain ; yet may he be reputed as just, seeing it is expressly said, "happy is the man, to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and whose sin is covered."—*Dalrymple, Earl of Stair, on the Divine Perfections.*

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST.—But though Christ be never so much exalted, he despises not the meanest

of his saints, nor refuses communion with them ; for he was in the form of God, (Phil. ii. 7.) when he took upon him the form of a servant to free us ; and he, who so far condescended, to bring us to heaven, he will receive us kindly when we come there. Whilst he was in the flesh, he owned Lazarus, even in the grave ; and, notwithstanding his despicable condition, called him his friend. When in heaven, he remembered his distressed members on earth, and took notice of Stephen when expiring (Acts vii.) and, when Saul was persecuting Christians, he cried out, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" as if he were one with those that love him. And, in his messages to the seven churches in the Apocalypse, he makes it evident, that he hath a particular regard to single persons, his greatness not diminishing his kindness, but making it more obliging. And, after his ascension he thought not much to say, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock : if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."—*Hon. Robert Boyle's Theological Works.*

UNION WITH GOD.—That which renders men so averse to believing themselves capable of an union with God, is nothing else but the thought of their own baseness and misery : yet, if this thought of theirs be sincere, let them pursue, as far as I have done, and let them confess our baseness to have only this effect with respect to God, that it hinders us from discovering, by our own strength, whether his mercy cannot render us capable of an union with him. For I would gladly be informed, whence this creature, which acknowledgeth himself so weak and contemptible, should obtain a right of setting bounds to the divine mercy, and of measuring it by such a rule and standard as his own fancy suggests. Man knows so little of the

divine essence, as to remain ignorant of what he is himself; and yet, disturbed at this imperfect view of his own condition, he boldly pronounceth, that 'tis beyond the power of God to qualify him for so sublime a conjunction. But I will ask him, whether God requires any thing else at his hands, but that he should know him, and should love him; and, since he finds himself, in his own nature, capable of knowing and of loving, upon what ground he suspects that the divine nature cannot exhibit itself, as the object of his knowledge and his love? For as he certainly knows, at least, that he is somewhat, so he no less certainly loves somewhat. If then he *sees* any thing under the present darkness of his understanding, and if amongst the things of this world, he can find somewhat which may engage his affection, should God be pleased to impart to him some ray of his essence, why should he not be able to know and to love his divine benefactor, according to the measure and proportion in which this honour was vouchsafed? There must, therefore, no doubt, be an intolerable presumption in these ways of reasoning, though veiled under an appearance of humility. For our humility can neither be rational nor sincere, unless it makes us confess, that, not knowing of ourselves even what we ourselves are, we cannot otherwise be instructed in our own condition, than by the assistance and information of heaven.—*Pascal's Thoughts*, p. 42.

RELIGION AN INTERNAL PRINCIPLE.—Believe it, religion is quite another thing from all these matters. He that fears the Lord of heaven and earth, walks humbly before him, thankfully lays hold of the message of redemption by Christ Jesus, strives to express his thankfulness by the sincerity of his obedience, is sorry with all his soul when he comes short of his

duty, walks watchfully in the denial of himself, and holds no confederacy with any lust or known sin, if he falls in the least measure, is restless till he hath made his peace by true repentance, is true to his promise, just in his actions, charitable to the poor, sincere in his devotions; that will not deliberately dishonour God, though with the greatest impunity; that hath his hope in heaven, and his conversation in heaven; that dare not do an unjust act, though never so much to his advantage; and all this, because he sees him that is invisible, and fears him because he loves him—fears him, as well for his goodness as his greatness. Such a man, whether he be an episcopal or a presbyterian, or an independent, or an anabaptist; whether he wears a surplice, or wears none; whether he hears organs, or hears none; whether he kneels at the communion, and, for conscience sake, stands or sits; he hath the life of religion in him, and that life acts in him, and shall conform his soul to the image of his Saviour, and walk along with him to eternity, notwithstanding his practice or non-practice of these indifferents.

On the other side, if a man fears not the eternal God, dares commit any sin with presumption, can drink excessively, swear vainly or falsely, commit adultery, lie, cozen, cheat, break his promises, live loosely; though he practise every ceremony never so curiously, or as stubbornly oppose; though he cry down bishops, or cry down presbytery; though he be re-baptized every day, or though he disclaim against it as heresy; though he fast all Lent, or feasts out of a pretence of avoiding superstition: Yet, notwithstanding these, or a thousand more external conformities, or zealous oppositions of them; he wants the life of religion.—*Sir Matthew Hale's Contemplations*, ii. 345.

SMALL NUMBER OF TRULY RELIGIOUS PERSONS.—

The bulk of mankind are by no means so far advanced in self-annihilation,² and in the love of God, and of his creatures, in, and through him, as appears to be required for the attainment of pure happiness. There are few, even in Christian countries, that so much as know what the true religion and purity of the heart is; at least that attend to it with care and earnestness; and in pagan countries still fewer by far. How exceedingly few then, must that little flock be, whose wills are broken and subjected to the divine will, who delight in happiness wherever they see it, who look upon what concerns themselves with indifference, and are perpetually intent upon their Father's business, in any proper sense of these words? For, according to the Scriptures, "*the gate that leadeth to life is strait, and there are few who find it,*" even though *they seek to enter in.* The righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, of the formal professors, who are yet no adulterers, extortioners, &c. will not be in any wise sufficient. "*Many are called,*" and "*but few chosen;*" and agreeably hereto, the first fruits, which are a Scripture type of the chosen or elect, are small in comparison of the lump. This world, with the bulk of its inhabitants, is all along in Scripture represented as doomed to destruction, on account of the degeneracy, idolatry, wickedness, which every where prevail in it. The true Jews and Christians are a separate people, in the world, not of the world, but hated and persecuted by it; because they shine as lights *in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation,* which cannot bear the light. If a man has but courage to see and acknowledge the truth, he will find the same doctrine expressed or implied in every part of the Bible.—*Hartley's Observations on Man*, ii. 406, &c.

CHAPTER X.

 TESTIMONIES TO THE DUTIES OF CHRISTIANITY.

SECTION I.

ATTENTION TO THE CONCERNS OF THE SOUL.

SERIOUSNESS OF MIND.—While we laugh, all things are serious around us. God is serious, who preserves us, and has patience towards us; Christ is serious, who shed his blood for us; the Holy Spirit is serious, when he strives with us; the whole creation is serious in serving God and us; all are serious in another world; how suitable, then, is it for man to be serious! and how can he be gay and trifling?—*Sir Francis Walsingham, quoted in Murray's Power of Religion.*

I have lived to see five sovereigns, and have been privy counsellor to four of them. I have seen the most remarkable things in foreign parts, and have been present at most state transactions for the last thirty years; and I have learned, after so many years experience, that seriousness is the greatest wisdom, temperance the best physic, and a good conscience the best estate. And, were I to live again, I would change the court for a cloister, my privy counsellor's bustle for a hermit's retirement, and the whole life I have lived in

the palace for an hour's enjoyment of God in the chapel. All things now forsake me, except my God, my duty, and my prayers.—*Sir John Mason, quoted in Murray's Power of Religion.*

FOLLY OF PREFERRING THIS WORLD TO GOD'S WILL.
 —And if we could afford ourselves but so much leisure as to consider, that he, which hath most in the world, hath, in respect of the world, nothing in it; and that he, which hath the longest time lent him to live in it, hath yet no proportion at all therein, setting it either by that which is past, when we were not, or by that time which is to come, in which we shall abide for ever; I say, if both, to wit, our proportion in the world, and our time in the world, differ not much from that which is nothing; it is not out of any excellence of understanding that we so much prize the one, which hath in effect no being, and so much neglect the other, which hath no ending; coveting those mortal things of the world, as if our souls were therein immortal, and neglecting those things which are immortal, as if ourselves, after the world, were but mortal. Yet when we once come in sight of the port of death, to which all winds drive us, and when, by letting fall that fatal anchor, which can never be weighed again, the navigation of this life takes end; then it is, I say, that our own cogitations, (those sad and severe cogitations formerly beaten from us by our health and felicity,) return again and pay us to the uttermost for all the pleasing passages of our lives past. It is then, that we cry out to God for mercy; then, when we can no longer exercise cruelty to others, and it is only then, that we are stricken through the soul with this terrible sentence, “that God will not be mocked.” For if, according to St. Peter, “the righteous scarcely be saved,” and that “God spar-

ed not his angels," where shall those appear, who, having served their appetites all their lives, presume to think that the severe commandments of the all-powerful God were given but in sport, and that the short breath which we draw, when death presseth us, if we can but fashion it to the sound of "mercy," (without any kind of satisfaction or amends,) is sufficient. But of this composition are all devout lovers of the world, that they fear all that is dureless and ridiculous; they fear the plots and practices of their opposites, and their very whisperings; they fear the opinions of men, which beat but upon shadows; they flatter and forsake the prosperous and unprosperous, be they friends or kings; yea, they dive under water like ducks at every pebble stone, that is but thrown towards them by a powerful hand; and, on the contrary, they shew an obstinate and giant-like valour against the terrible judgments of the all-powerful God: yea, they shew themselves gods against God, and slaves towards men; towards men, whose bodies and consciences are alike rotten.—*Sir Walter Raleigh's Preface to his History of the World.*

IMPORTANCE OF THE SOUL AND ITS CONCERNS.—

Let us hence learn duly to prize and to value our souls. Is the body such a rare piece, what then is the soul? The body is but the husk or shell, the soul is the kernel; the body is but the cask, the soul the precious liquor contained in it; the body is but the cabinet, the soul the jewel; the body is but the ship or vessel, the soul the pilot; the body is but the tabernacle, and a poor clay tabernacle or cottage too, the soul the inhabitant; the body is but the machine or engine, the soul that *ενδον τι* that excites and quickens it; the body is but the dark lantern, the soul or spirit is the candle of the Lord that burns in it. And

seeing there is such difference between the soul and the body in respect of excellency, surely our better part challenges our greatest care and diligence to make provision for it.

You will say, how shall we manifest our care of our souls? What shall we do for them? I answer, the same we do for our bodies. *First*, We feed our bodies; our souls are also to be fed. The food of the soul is knowledge, especially knowledge in the things of God, and the things that concern its eternal peace and happiness; the doctrine of Christianity, the word of God read and preached, 1 Pet. ii. 2. *As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.* Heb. v. 12. The apostle speaks both of milk and strong meat; milk he there calls the principles of the doctrine of Christ. And again, 1 Cor. ii. 3. *I have fed you with milk, and not with meat, for hitherto you were not able to bear it.* So we see, in the apostle's phrase, feeding of the flock, is teaching and instructing of them. Knowledge is the foundation of practice: it is impossible to do God's will before we know it; the word must be received into an honest and good heart, and understood, before any fruit can be brought forth.

Secondly, We heal and cure our bodies, when they are inwardly sick, or outwardly harmed. Sin is the sickness of the soul, Matt. ix. 12. *They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick,* saith our Saviour, by way of similitude; which he explains in the next verse, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." For the cure of this disease, an humble, serious, hearty repentance is the only physic, not to expiate the guilt of it, but to qualify us to partake of the benefit of that atonement, which our Saviour Christ hath made by the sacrifice of himself, and restore us to the favour of God, which we

have forfeited ; it being, as much as in us lies, an undoing again what we have done.

Thirdly, We clothe and adorn our bodies ; indeed too much time and too many thoughts we bestow upon that ; our souls also are to be clothed with holy and virtuous habits, and adorned with good works, 1 Pet. v. 5. *Be clothed with humility*. And, in the same epistle, chap. ii. 2. he exhorts women *to adorn themselves, not with that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and wearing gold, &c. but with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price*. And in Rev. xix. 8. *the righteousness of the saints is called fine linen* ; and the saints are said to be clothed in *white raiment*. Matt. xxiii. 11. works of righteousness, and a conversation becoming the gospel, is called a *wedding garment*. Col. iii. 10. *Put on the new man*. And again, *Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, bowels of mercy, meekness, &c.* On the contrary, vicious habits, and sinful actions are compared to filthy garments. So Zech. vii. 3. Joshua the high priest is said to be *clothed with filthy garments* ; which, in the next verse, are interpreted his iniquities, either personal, or of the people whom he represented : *I have caused thy iniquity to pass from thee, and will clothe thee with change of raiment*.

Fourthly, We arm and defend our bodies ; and our souls have as much need of armour as they ; for the life of a Christian is a continual warfare ; and we have potent and vigilant enemies to encounter withal ; the devil, the world, and this corrupt flesh we carry about us ; we had need, therefore, to take to us the Christian panoply, *to put on the whole armour of God, that we may withstand in the evil day, and having done all, may stand ; having our loins girt with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness, and our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace*. Above

all, taking the shield of faith, and for an helmet the hope of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, Eph. vi. 13, 14. He, that with this Christian armour manfully fights against and repels the temptations and assaults of his spiritual enemies; he, that keeps his garments pure, and his conscience void of offence towards God and towards man, shall enjoy perfect peace here, and assurance for ever.—Ray's Wisdom of God in Creation, part ii. apud finem.

IMPORTANCE OF ELEVATING THE THOUGHTS ABOVE TEMPORAL OBJECTS.—The soul should be inured to a generous contempt of other things; and this we may acquire by looking thoroughly into them; by observing how mean and sordid, fading and transitory, are all bodily pleasures, all the objects that afford them, and our very bodies themselves; by observing how small these joys are, and how little necessary, which arise from the external elegance and grandeur of life; and how uncertain they are; what cares they cost in acquiring and preserving, and how soon they cloy and give disgust! As to speculative knowledge, how uncertain and imperfect are many sciences, leading the embarrassed minds into new obscurities, and difficulties, and anxious darkness; and discovering nothing more clearly, than the blindness and darkness, or the small penetration of our understanding. Again, how poor an affair is glory and applause! which is ordinarily conferred by the ignorant, who cannot judge of real excellence; our enjoyment of which is confined within the short space of this life; which can be diffused through but a small part of this earth; and which must soon be swallowed up in eternal oblivion, along with all the remembrance, either of those who applaud, or of the persons applauded. This thought too, of the shortness of life, will equally en-

able the soul to bear or despise adversity ; taking this also along, that the soul, who bears it well, will obtain new and enlarged strength, and, like a lively fire, which turns every thing cast upon it into its own nature, and breaks forth superior with stronger heat, so may the good man make adverse events matter of new honour, and of nobler virtues. To sum up all briefly, all things related to this mortal state are fleeting, unstable, corruptible ; which must speedily perish, and be presently swallowed up in that boundless ocean of eternity. For what can be called lasting in human life ? Days, months, and years, are continually passing away ; all must die, nor is any sure that death shall not surprise him this very day ; and when that last hour overtakes him, all that is past is lost for ever ; nor can there remain to him any enjoyment, except of what he has acted virtuously ; which may yield some joyful hope of a happy immortality.—*Hutcheson's Introduction to Moral Philosophy*, b. i. c. 6. § 2.

Let us employ the time present ; eternity will be our reward, if we make a good use of it. Let us always have before our eyes the nature and consequences of sin ; let us remember, that it will deprive us of the favour of God, and expose us to his indignation. Let us reflect on the value of eternity, and on that life and that immortality, which Christ hath brought to light by the gospel. The smaller satisfactions of this present short life, which are but puerile amusements, must disappear, when placed in competition with the greatness and durability of the glory which is hereafter. Let us never forget that we were born for eternity ; and that an affair of so great importance should be the principal occupation of our lives. Let us follow the light that will conduct us thither ; the precepts of our Saviour plainly point out the way. How insensible then must we be, to suffer ourselves

to be directed by any other! We acknowledge the corruption of our nature; we confess that it terminates in death; we are persuaded that Jesus hath the words of eternal life. Let us then study them with attention; apply them with sincerity to ourselves; continually inculcate them on our minds; and seek the assistance of that light, which was brought from heaven to earth.—*Baron Haller's Letters to his Daughter*, let. 14.

NOT ENJOYMENT, BUT MORAL IMPROVEMENT, MAN'S END.—The destination of man upon this earth is not happiness, but the advance towards moral perfection. It is in vain, that, by a childish play of words, this improvement is called happiness; we clearly feel the difference between enjoyments and sacrifices; and if language was to adopt the same terms for such discordant ideas, our natural judgment would reject the deception.

It has been often said, that human nature has a tendency towards happiness: this is its involuntary instinct; but the instinct of reflection is virtue. By giving man very little influence over his own happiness, and means of improvement without number, the intention of the Creator was surely not to make the object of our lives an almost unattainable end. Devote all your powers to the attainment of happiness; control your character, if you can, to such a degree as not to feel those wandering desires, which nothing can satisfy; and, in spite of all these wise arrangements of self-love, you will be afflicted with disorders; you will be ruined, you will be imprisoned, and all the edifice of your selfish cares will be overturned.

It may be replied to this—"I will be so circumspect, that I will not have any enemies." Let it be so; you will not have to reproach yourself with any

acts of generous imprudence; but sometimes we have seen the least courageous among the persecuted. "I will manage my fortune so well, that I will preserve it."—I believe it; but there are universal disasters, which do not spare even those whose principle has been never to expose themselves for others; and illness, and accidents of every kind, dispose of our condition in spite of ourselves. How then should happiness be the end of our moral liberty in this short life; happiness, which chance, suffering, old age, and death, put out of our power? The case is not the same with moral improvement; every day, every hour, every minute, may contribute to it; all fortunate and unfortunate events equally assist it; and this work depends entirely on ourselves, whatever may be our situation upon earth.—*De Stael's Germany*, iii. 204.

IMPROVEMENT OF THE MEANS OF GRACE.—It is an aphorism in physic, that they, which in the beginning of sickness eat much and mend not, fall at last to a general loathing of food. The moral is true in divinity. He that hath a sick conscience, and lives a hearer under a fruitful ministry, if he grows not sound, he will learn to despise the word. Contemned blessings leave room for curses. He, that neglects the good he may have, shall find the evil he should not have. Justly he sits in darkness, that would not light his candle when the fire burned clearly. He that needs counsel, and will not hear it, destines himself to misery, and is the willing author of his own woe. Continue at a stay he cannot long; if he could, not to proceed is backward. And this is as dangerous to the soul, as the other is to the body. Pitiful is his estate, that hates the thing should help him. If ever you see a drowning man refuse help, conclude him a wilful murderer. When

God affords me plentiful means, woe be to me if they prove not profitable. I had better have a deaf ear, than hear, and to neglect or hate. To the burying of such treasures there belongs a curse; to their mispending, judgments.—*Feltham's Resolves*, No. 53.

HEAVENLY-MINDEDNESS.—We toil on in the vain pursuits and frivolous occupations of the world, die in our harness, and then expect, if no gigantic crime stands in the way, to step immediately into the kingdom of heaven: but this is impossible; for, without a previous detachment from the business of this world, we cannot be prepared for the happiness of another. Yet this could make no part of the morality of pagans, because their virtues were altogether connected with this business, and consisted chiefly in conducting it with honour to themselves, and benefit to the public; but Christianity has a nobler object in view, which, if not attended to, must be lost for ever. This object is that celestial mansion, of which we should never lose sight, and to which we should be ever advancing during our journey through life; but this by no means precludes us from performing the business, or enjoying the amusements of travellers, provided they detain us not too long, or lead us too far out of our way.—*Soame Jenyns' Works*, iv. 56.

THE ADVANTAGE OF SPIRITUAL MEDITATION.—But one thing, that may farther induce us to this way of thinking, is, that occasional reflections may gradually bring the soul to a frame, or temper, which may be called heavenly-mindedness, by which she may acquire a disposition to make pious reflections on every occasion, often without designing it; but such must be so accustomed to this way of thinking, that they must do it of their own accord, which habit may be acquired by practice; and when this habit is once ac-

quired, and the soul hath acquired a disposition to make spiritual uses of earthly things, the advantage and delight of such a frame of mind will be extraordinary ; it being a satisfaction to an ingenious person, to be able to make the world both his library and oratory, and to find pleasure and delight which way soever he turns his eyes, every object presenting good thoughts to his mind, which may be gathered with innocency, as well as pleasure, and with as little prejudice to the subject that affords them, as honey is from flowers. If we would but pursue this method, it must needs prevent that dullness or drowsiness, which blemishes our devotion ; and we might, out of every thing, strike some sparkle of celestial fire, that would kindle, feed, or revive it. And, if but half the idle time, that must cost us tears or blushes, were thus employed, ministers need not so long insist on the uses of their doctrines, the world being a pulpit, and every creature a preacher, and every accident affording instruction, reproof, or exhortation ; each burial would put us in mind of our mortality, and each marriage-feast, of that of the Lamb ; each cross would increase our desires to be with Christ, and each mercy would move our obedience to so good a master. The happiness of others, would move us to serve him that gave it, and their misery make us thankful that we were free from it ; their sins make us ashamed of the same, and their virtues would excite our emulation. And when once we can look upon the things of the world, as men do upon water gilded with the sun-beams, not for the sake of the water itself, but as it represents a more glorious object ; and when a pious soul can once spiritualize whatever objects he meets with, that habit may be the most effectual means to make the saying good, that “ all things work together for good to them that

“*seek God;*” a devout occasional meditation, being from never so mean a theme, like Jacob’s ladder, whose “*foot leaned on the earth, and the top reached up to heaven.*”—*Hon. Robert Boyle’s Theological Works.*

SECTION II.

GENERAL DUTIES TOWARDS GOD.

NATURE OF PIETY TOWARDS GOD.—Piety is called religion, *a religando*, from tying or binding the soul again to God; and is also called devotion, *a devovendo*, from vowing or consecrating the soul from common use to God; and so all things consecrated are said to be holy, being separated from common use as to their chief use, without excluding consisting subordinate uses.

The necessary and chief acts of religion and devotion, are confidence in God, and love to God. Faith and love are the fountain graces, from whence the rest flow. Neither of them are attainable without the knowledge and consideration of their proper objects, so qualified as may excite these affections, which must be by the perfections in the object, on which these affections lay hold, and by which they are moved.—*Dalrymple, Earl of Stair, on the Divine Perfections.*

PREEMINENCE OF PIETY.—But besides that *rational* enjoyment, which is the proper result of vir-

tue and philosophy, there is a *passionate* enjoyment, of such an object as is capable of exciting our love and admiration. If we shall now consider the supreme cause of all things, as being the object of this passion in our mind, a passion as far removed from sensual, as the object of it is from our idea of body, then here would be something of a passionate enjoyment, a happy feeling of a pleased conscience, satisfied with itself, and transported with a view of certain attributes in an object inspiring love and veneration.

That this frame of mind, in which the Author of our being and enjoyment is held in the highest esteem of love and veneration, may be termed piety, will appear by considering: By piety, is properly expressed, that love and esteem, which men, come to the perfection of their nature, show towards their aged parents, who had been the immediate instruments of their life and happiness. Now piety towards God, will be no other than an extended intellectual view of things, in which we find the general parent of mankind, providing bountifully for the life, and benevolently for the happiness of his children.—*Hutton's Investigation*, iii. 642.

OBLIGATION TO PIETY.—Man thus finds himself truly allied to God his heavenly Father; he finds himself to be the peculiar care of provident wisdom, and the only created living being which is to have a future existence. Now, shall the mere savage love the man, who was his parent; shall the most ignorant revere the bones of him, whom he had called father; and shall not man, enlightened with the knowledge of his true descent, look up, with all the duty of his situation, to the cause of his existence—to the power who made him know himself? Shall he not look up,

with deep submission, to the just disposer of his present life, and, with filial affection, to the anchor of his future hope? Impossible; man cannot learn to think and know, without acknowledging divine perfection in his Maker; he cannot learn to value himself, without adoring his Creator.—*Hutton's Investigation*, iii. 647.

He also, that hath the idea of an intelligent but frail and weak being, made by and depending on another who is eternal, omnipotent, perfectly wise and good, will as certainly know that man is to honour, fear, and obey God, as that the sun shines when he sees it. For, if he hath but the ideas of two such beings in his mind, and will turn his thoughts that way, and consider them, he will as certainly find that the inferior, finite, and dependent, is under an obligation to obey the Supreme and Infinite, as he is certain to find that *three, four, and seven*, are less than *fifteen*, if he will consider and compute those numbers; nor can he be surer in a clear morning that the sun is risen, if he will but open his eyes, and turn them that way. But yet these truths being never so certain, never so clear, he may be ignorant of either or all of them, who will never take the pains to employ his faculties as he should to inform himself about them.—*Locke on the Human Understanding*, book iv. chap. xiv.

DUTY OF KNOWING GOD.—The Scripture doth frequently inculcate the benefit of knowing God, of remembering him, of meditating on his perfections, his laws, and dispensations; and gives it as the character of the wicked, that they know not God, that they have him not before their eyes, “whom to know is life everlasting.” “This is life eternal, to know God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.”

The knowledge of God cannot formally be life eternal ; but it is the mean necessary to attain it, because it doth excite that joy, in which it doth chiefly consist. It is said of the wicked, that God is not in all their thoughts, that is, so far as they can shun ; and that they will have no thoughts of the Most High, because the thoughts of God crush their sinful inclinations and pleasures, which fall before them as Dagon did before the ark of God. Job gives it as a discriminating test between the godly and the hypocrite, only knowable by every man of himself, when he says of the hypocrite, “ Will he delight himself in the “ Almighty ? will he always call upon God ? ” Some notion of religion will arise from the notion of a Deity, convincing that God is to be adored, by acknowledgment of his power, bounty, justice, and mercy ; by supplication for his favour, and the requisites of life ; by deprecations of his displeasure, justice, and wrath ; praise and thanksgiving for benefits received or hoped. Much more will result from the improved knowledge of God by the light of nature, and yet more by the probability of his revealed will ; whereby it cannot but be acknowledged, that if these things be true, which are contained in Scripture, God’s bounty and mercy to mankind, is far greater than what could be dreamed of from the light of nature. But, all this is far short of the knowledge, arising from the illumination of the Holy Spirit in the souls of the regenerate, by which they are capable of a far more glorious and firm apprehension of the divine perfections and dispensations ; and a quite other and far greater joy therein, and in the persuasion of peace and reconciliation with God, and in the hope of that glory, which is “ greater than ear hath heard, “ or eye hath seen, or hath entered into the heart of “ man to consider.” The knowledge of God even in

the renewed, hath great variety of degrees ; and it is both the interest and duty of all of them to extend it so far as their capacities and opportunities do enable them, that they may increase their comfort, and strengthen their faith against the suggestions of Satan, and the seductions of weak or wicked men, misrepresenting God not so much in his power and wisdom, as in his goodness and purity, whereby they do exceedingly encroach upon that infinite loveliness, whereby he draws and ravishes the souls of men, and doth not merely drive them by the power of his sovereignty.—*Dalrymple, Earl of Stair, on the Divine Perfections.*

DUTY OF DEVOUTLY MEDITATING ON THE MERCY OF GOD.—There are three things, especially, that a Christian should know ; his own misery, God's love, his own thankful obedience. His misery, how just ! God's love, how free ; how undeserved ! his own thankfulness, how due ; how necessary ! Consideration of one successively begets the apprehension of all. Our misery shews his love ; his love calls for our acknowledgement. Want makes a bounty weightier : if we think on our needs, we cannot but admire his mercies ; how dull were we, if we should not value the relief of our necessities ? he cannot but esteem the benefit, that unexpectedly helps him in his deepest distress. That love is most to be prized, whose only motive is goodness. The thought of this will form a disposition grateful. Who can meditate so unbottomed a love, and not study for a thankful demeanour ? His mind is cross to nature, that requites not affection with gratitude. All favours have this success, if they light on good ground, they bring forth thanks. Let me first think my misery, without my Saviour's mercy ; next his mercy with-

out my merits ; and from the meditation of these two, my sincere thanks will spring. Though I cannot conceive of the former, as they are infinite, and beyond my thought ; yet will I so ponder them, as they may enkindle the fire of my unfeigned and zealous thanksgiving. That time is well spent, wherein we study thankfulness.—*Feltham's Resolves*, No. 77.

DICTATES OF PIETY TOWARDS GOD.—I have here only considered the Supreme Being by the light of reason and philosophy. If we would see him in all the wonders of his mercy, we must have recourse to revelation, which represents him to us, not only as infinitely great and glorious, but as infinitely good and just, in his dispensations towards man. But as this is a theory, which falls under every one's consideration, though, indeed, it can never be sufficiently considered, I shall here only take notice of that habitual worship and veneration, which we ought to pay to this Almighty Being. We should often refresh our minds with the thought of Him, and annihilate ourselves before Him, in the contemplation of our own worthlessness, and of his transcendent excellency and perfection. This would imprint in our minds such a constant and uninterrupted awe and veneration, as that which I am here recommending, and which is in reality a kind of incessant prayer, and reasonable humiliation of the soul before Him who made it.

This would effectually kill in us all the little seeds of pride, vanity, and self conceit, which are apt to shoot up in the minds of such, whose thoughts turn more on those comparative advantages, which they enjoy over some of their fellow-creatures, than on that infinite distance, which is placed between them and the supreme model of all perfection. It would

likewise quicken our desires and endeavours of uniting ourselves to Him, by all the acts of religion and virtue. Such an habitual homage to the Supreme Being would, in a particular manner, banish from among us that prevailing impiety of using His name on the most trivial occasions. I find the following passage in an excellent sermon, preached at the funeral of a gentleman who was an honour to his country, and a more diligent, as well as successful inquirer into the works of nature, than any other our nation has ever produced*. “He had the profoundest veneration for the great God of heaven and earth, that I have ever observed in any person. The very name of God was never mentioned by him, without a pause and a visible stop in his discourse; in which, one that knew him most particularly above twenty years, has told me that he was so exact, that he does not remember to have observed him once to fail in it.”

Every one knows the veneration which was paid by the Jews to a name so great, wonderful, and holy; they would not let it enter even into their religious discourses. What can we then think of those, who make use of so tremendous a name in the ordinary expressions of their anger, mirth, and most impertinent passions?—of those, who admit it into the most familiar questions and assertions, ludicrous phrases, and works of humour? Not to mention those, who violate it by solemn perjuries! It would be an affront to reason, to endeavour to set forth the horror and profaneness of such a practice. The very mention of it, exposes it sufficiently to those, in whom the light of nature, not to say religion, is not utterly extinguished.—*Addison, Spectator, No. 531.*

* The Honourable Robert Boyle.

The inward sense of the heart, must shew at once that this preeminence and infinite grandeur of the original cause of all, ought to be entertained with the highest admiration and praise, and submissive veneration of soul ; and since there is no desire more becoming the rational nature, than that of knowledge, and of discovering the natures and causes of the greatest subjects, no occupation of the mind can be more honourable, or even delightful, than studying to know the divine perfections : nor, indeed, without ascending to the knowledge of the supreme excellency, can these honourable intellectual powers we are endued with, find a proper object fully to exercise and satisfy them.

As to the moral attributes of God, that original and most gracious power, which by its boundless force, goodness, and wisdom, has formed this universe, granting to each being its proper nature, powers, senses, appetites, or reason, and even moral excellencies ; and with a liberal hand supplying each one with all things, conducive to such pleasures and happiness as their natures can receive ; this power, I say, should be acknowledged with the most grateful affections, with generous love, and the highest praises and thanksgiving : and with a joyful hope and confidence, purified from all vanity, pride, or arrogance, since we are such dependent creatures, who owe to it all we enjoy.

If we more fully consider the divine goodness and moral perfections ; that the Deity must delight in all virtue and goodness ; that he must approve and love all good men : this will suggest to all such still more joyful hopes, with an higher, and more delightful confidence and trust, and more ardent love of virtue, and of the Deity. Hence will arise a stable security and tranquillity of the soul, which can commit itself,

and all its concerns, to the divine providence. Hence, also, a constant endeavour to imitate the Deity; and cultivate in ourselves all such affections as make us resemble him; with a steady purpose of exciting all our powers in acting well that part, which God and nature have assigned us, whether in prosperity, or adversity. Nor, without this knowledge of the Deity, and those affections, can a good benevolent heart find any sure ground of hope and security, either as to itself or the dearest objects of its affection, or as to the whole state of the universe. Nor can the virtuous mind, which extends its affectionate concerns to all mankind, or the love of moral excellence itself, ever be satisfied and at rest, unless it be assured that there is some excellent being, complete in every perfection, in the knowledge and love of which, with a prospect of being beloved by it, it can fully acquiesce, and commit itself, and the dearest objects of its cares, and the whole of mankind, to his gracious providence, with full security. And further, since all the more lively affections of the soul naturally display themselves in some natural expressions, and by this exercise, are further strengthened; the good man must naturally incline to employ himself frequently and at stated times in some acts of devotion, contemplating and adoring the divine excellencies; giving thanks for his goodness; humbly imploring the pardon of his transgressions; expressing his submission, resignation, and trust in God's providence; and imploring his aid in the acquisition of virtue, and in reforming his temper, that he may be furnished for every good work. For the frequent meditation upon the Supreme and perfect model of all goodness, must powerfully kindle an ardent desire of the same in every ingenuous heart.

Where such devout sentiments are cherished, and

affections suitable to them, there must be kindled an ardent desire of inquiring into all indications of the divine will. And whatever discoveries we find made of it, whether in the very order of nature, or by any supernatural means, which some of the wisest of the heathens seem to have expected, the good man will embrace them with joy.—*Hulcheson's Introduction to Moral Philosophy*, b. i. chap. iv.

The second part of piety, is to cherish right affections, suitable to those right notions of the divine nature. These affections are, veneration of his infinite and incomprehensible greatness; adoration of his wisdom and power; love of his goodness and mercy; resignation to his will; gratitude for his innumerable and inestimable benefits; a disposition to obey cheerfully all his laws; fear in the apprehension of his displeasure; joy in the hope of his approbation; and a desire to imitate him as far as we are able, and, with well-meant, though weak endeavours, to second the purposes of his providence, by promoting the virtue and happiness of our fellow-creatures. They who believe in the infinite goodness, greatness, wisdom, justice, and power, of the Supreme Being, will acknowledge, that these glorious attributes do naturally call forth the pious affections above mentioned; and that not to cultivate those affections, or to encourage evil passions inconsistent with them, must be in the highest degree criminal and unnatural. If we neglect the means of cultivating pious affections, it is a sign that in us piety is weak, or rather wanting; and that we are regardless of our own improvement, and insensible to the best interests of mankind. Want of pious affection is a proof of great depravity. When infinite goodness cannot awaken our love, nor almighty power command our reverence; when unerring wis-

dom cannot raise our admiration ; when the most important favours, continually, and gratuitously bestowed, cannot kindle our gratitude ; how perverse, how unnatural must we be ! In order to guard against these, and the like impieties, we shall do well to meditate frequently on the divine perfections, and on our own demerit, dependence, and manifold infirmities. Thus we may get the better of pride and self-conceit, passions most unfriendly to piety ; and form our minds to gratitude, humility, and devotion. But, instead of this, if we cherish bad passions of a contrary nature, or allow ourselves in impious practice ; if at any time we think unworthily of our Creator ; if we use his name in common discourse without reverence ; if we invoke him to be the witness of what is false or frivolous : if we practise cursing or swearing, or any other mode of speech, disrespectful to his adorable majesty : if, by serious argument, we attempt the subversion of religious principles ; or if, by parody or ludicrous allusion, we endeavour to make scriptural phraseology the occasion of merriment ; in any of these cases, we too plainly shew, that our minds are familiarized more or less to impiety, and in great danger of utter depravation.—*Beattie's Elements of Moral Science*, ii. 80. 88.

SECTION III.

LOVE TOWARD GOD.

Now there is another part of charity, which is the basis and pillar of this, and that is, the love of God,

for whom we love our neighbours; for this I think charity, to love God for himself, and our neighbour for God. All that is truly amiable is God, or, as it were, a divided piece of himself, that retains a reflex or shadow of himself. Nor is it strange, that we should place affection on that which is invisible. All that we truly love is thus; and what we adore under the affection of our senses, deserves not the honour of so pure a title. Thus we adore virtue, though to the eye of sense she be invisible. Thus that part of our noble friends, that we love, is not that part that we embrace, but that insensible part that our arms cannot embrace. God, being all goodness, can love nothing but himself and the traduction of his holy spirit.

—*Brown's Religio Medici.*

Hence, it appearing how fit an object of our love God is, for what he is in himself; we shall next shew how far he deserves our love from what he is to us; the vastness, freeness, disinterestedness, and constancy, as well as advantageousness of his love to us, making all the love we can pay but little of what we owe him. We think ourselves obliged to love our parents, though they are wicked and unkind, and but God's instruments in producing us, we being born by virtue of his ordination. But God conferring on us the blessing promised to his ancient people, whom he assured that *he would love them freely*, he loved us both when we were not at all, and when we were his enemies: "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son," &c. Before we existed, indeed, nothing could be a motive to the love of God: and, when we were enemies, "God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," when we had no other motives for his love, except the want of them. "Yet God so loved the world, that he gave his only begot-

ten Son," who also so loved us, that he, "being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation," &c. Phil. ii. 6; he loving at no less a rate than death, suffering the extremest indignities, debasing himself to exalt us. "He was wounded for our transgressions," &c. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," &c. Men, having displeased God, and forfeited happiness, and though in a forlorn condition, were careless of the means of recovery, as well as incapable of contriving them. Yet then his love contrived expedients to reconcile his justice and mercy, and sinners to himself, viz. by the incarnation of his Son, which was so advantageous to us, and so wonderful, that the angels desire to look into those divine mysteries.—*Hon. Robert Boyle's Theological Works.*

Affection to a creature must be limited; but unmixed and unbounded goodness is the object of unbounded affection. The heart does not rest in any human enjoyment, but it rests in God; the object is adequate, and the enjoyment complete. Divine love attracts the ardour and sensibility of youth, and averts debasing passions. The first feelings of devotion are remembered with delight. God is sought, and he is found in the outgoings of the morning, in delightful and awful scenes, in the peace and in the tumult of nations, in the inmost recesses of the soul. When the mind is unoccupied, it is drawn by love to the Father of mercies; when wonted sleep departs, it is cheered by the returning sense of his presence. Love to God brightens the sunshine of prosperity, and perfumes with sweet incense the sacrifices which are made to virtue. Every thing praiseworthy is to be expected from the youth, who loves his Creator, and acts under his eye.—*Lord Kames on the Culture of the Heart.*

I know not whether it is more true, that likeness is the cause of love, or love the cause of likeness. In agreeing dispositions, the first is certain; in those that are not, the latter is evident. The first is the easier love; the other the more worthy. The one hath a lure to draw it; the other without respect is voluntary. Men love us for the similitude we have with themselves; God merely for his goodness, when yet we are contrary to him. Since he hath loved me, when I was not like him, I will strive to be like him, because he hath loved me. I would be like him, being my friend, that loved me when I was his enemy. Then only is love powerful, when it frames us to the will of the loved. Lord, though I cannot serve thee as I ought, let me love thee as I ought. Grant this, and I know I shall serve thee better.—*Feltham's Resolves*, No. 98.

As the needle in a dial, removed from his point, never leaves his quivering motion, till it settles itself in the just place it always stands in; so fares it with a Christian in this world: nothing can so charm him, but he will still mind his Saviour. All that put him out of the quest of heaven are but disturbances. Though the pleasures, profits, or honours of this life, may sometimes shuffle him out of his usual course; yet he wavers up and down in trouble, runs to and fro like quicksilver, and is never quiet within, till he returns to his wonted life and inward happiness: there he sets down his rest in a sweet, unperceived, inward content; which, though unseen to others, he esteems more, than all that the world calls by the name of felicity. They are to him as May-games to a prince, fitter for children than the royalty of a crown. It shall no more grieve me to live in a continued sorrow, than it shall joy me to find a secret perturbation in the world's choicest solaces. If I find my joy in them

without inquietness, that will prove a burdensome mirth. For, finding my affections settle to them without resistance, I cannot but distrust myself of trusting them too much. A full delight in earthly things argues a neglect of heavenly. I can hardly think him honest, that loves a harlot for her bravery, more than his wife for her virtues. But, while an inward distaste shews me these latter unsavoury, if my joy be uncomplete in these terrene felicities, my inward unsettledness in them shall make my content both sufficient and full.—*Feltham's Resolves*, No. 30.

THE LOVE OF GOD IMPROVES MAN'S NATURE.—The perpetual exertion of a pleasing affection towards a being infinite in power, knowledge, and goodness, and who is also our friend and father, cannot but enhance all our joys, and alleviate all our sorrows ; the sense of his presence and protection will restrain all actions that are excessive, irregular, or hurtful ; support and encourage us in all such as are of a contrary nature ; and infuse such peace and tranquillity of mind, as will enable us to see clearly, and act uniformly. The perfection, therefore, of every part of our natures, must depend upon the love of God, and the constant comfortable sense of his presence.

With respect to benevolence, or the love of our neighbour, it may be observed, that this can never be free from partiality and selfishness, till we take our station in the divine nature, and view every thing from thence, and in the relation which it bears to God. If the relation to ourselves be made the point of view, our prospect must be narrow, and the appearance of what we do see distorted, when we consider the scenes of folly, vanity, and misery, which must present themselves to our sight in this point ; when we are disappointed in the happiness of our friends, or feel the re-

sentment of our enemies ; our benevolence will begin to languish, and our hearts to fail us ; we shall complain of the corruption and wickedness of that world, which we have hitherto loved with a benevolence merely human ; and shew by our complaints, that we are still deeply tinged by the same corruption and wickedness. This is generally the case with young and unexperienced persons in the beginning of a virtuous course, and before they have made a due advancement in the ways of piety. Human benevolence, though *sweet in the mouth is bitter in the belly* ; and the disappointments which it meets with are sometimes apt to incline us to call the divine goodness in question. But he who is possessed with a full assurance of this, who loves God with his whole powers, as an inexhaustible fountain of love and beneficence to all his creatures, at all times, and in all places, as much when he chastises as when he rewards, will learn thereby to love enemies as well as friends ; the sinful and miserable as well as the holy and happy ; to rejoice and give thanks for every thing which he sees and feels, however irreconcilable to his present suggestions, and to labour as an instrument under God for the promotion of virtue and happiness, with real courage and constancy, *knowing that his labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.*

In like manner, the moral sense requires a perpetual support and direction from the love of God, to keep it steady and pure. When men cease to regard God in a due measure, and to make him their ultimate end, having some other end, beyond which they do not look, they are very apt to relapse into negligence and callosity, and to act without any virtuous principle ; and, on the other hand, if they often look up to him, but not with a filial love and confidence, those *weighty matters of the law, they tilth mint, anise, and*

cummin; and fill themselves with endless scruples and anxieties about the lawfulness and unlawfulness of trivial actions : whereas he, who loves God with all his heart, cannot but have a constant care not to offend him, at the same time that his amiable notions of God, and the consciousness of his love and sincerity towards him, are such a fund of hope and joy, as precludes all scruples that are unworthy of the divine goodness, or unsuitable to our present state of frailty and ignorance.—*Hartley's Observations on Man*, ii. 309.

THE LOVE OF GOD CONDUCTIVE TO HEALTH.—If, loving every thing in proportion to its excellence, we should regard God only with an infinite love, and other things with no love, or at least with such as would be none, when compared with the love of God; then one simple and only concern would possess our minds, and all our thoughts, words, and actions, would aim together at this one thing, that we might love God alone more and more fervently. Hence we would be freed from all anxious solicitude about any thing whatever. But that solicitous and anxious care about external things is the greatest torment to our minds; and it is easily seen, from what is said above, that vexation and anxiety of mind is the source of very many diseases.

In the next place, as love produces a resemblance between the manners of the person who loves, and the manners of the person who is loved; if we would love God, who is infinitely perfect, with the most intense love, we would apply ourselves with our whole strength to the imitation of his perfections. Whence, hatred, malice, luxury, lust, indolence, and the other vices of the mind, the fruitful sources of bodily diseases, would be dried up.

Finally, since divine love not only exalts the mind

with a certain loftiness and nobility, but also diffuses through it the most exquisite pleasure and joy, (for, if we believe the sacred prophet, there is with God fulness of joy, and at his right hand flow perennial rivers of pleasure,) and, as the more fervently we love, so much the more our felicity increases; assuredly the lovers of God must be blessed, with a joy unspeakably tranquil and serene; than which nothing can possibly be conceived more efficaciously conducive to the preserving of health, and the prolonging of life. — *Translated from Dr. Cheyne's Treatise on the Art of Preserving Health and Prolonging Life*, p. 185.

PRACTICAL PROGRESS OF THE LOVE OF GOD.— The love of God may be considered as the law of the theopathic affections; for they all end in it, and it is the sum total of them all. In its first rise, it must, like all the rest of them, resemble the sympathetic one of the same name; and thus it differs from the rest in *their* first rise, and is, as it were, contrary to fear. In its first rise, it is often tinged with fondness and familiarity, and leans much towards enthusiasm; as, on the other hand, the fear is often at first a slavish superstitious dread. By degrees, the fear and love qualify each other; and by uniting with the other theopathic affections, they all together coalesce into a reverential, humble, filial love, attended with a peace, comfort, and joy, that passeth all belief of those who have not experienced it; so that they look upon the discourses and writings of those who have to be either hypocrisy, or romantic jargon. The book of *Psalms* affords the sublimest and most correct expressions of this kind: and can never be too much studied by those who would cherish, purify, and perfect in themselves, a devout frame of mind. And this single circumstance, exclusive of all other consi-

derations, appears to me a most convincing proof of the divine authority of this book, and consequently of the rest of the books of the Old and New Testament. But they have all the same evidence in their favour in their respective degrees. They are all helps to beget in us the love of God, and tests whether we have it or no; and he who "*meditates day and night on the law of God,*" joining thereto the practical contemplation of his works, as prescribed by the Scriptures, and the "*purification of his hands and heart,*" will soon arrive at that devout and happy state, which is signified by the love of God. I will here add some practical consequences, resulting from what has been advanced concerning the theopathic affections.

First, then, though an excess of passion of every kind, such as is not under the command of the voluntary power, is to be avoided as dangerous and sinful, yet we must take care to serve God with our affections, as well as our outward actions; and, indeed, unless we do the first, we shall not long continue to do the last; the internal frame of our minds, being the source and spring from whence our external actions flow. God, who gives us all our faculties and powers, has a right to all; and it is a secret disloyalty and infidelity, not to pay the tribute of our affections. They are evidently in our power, immediately or mediately; and therefore he, who goes to his profession, occupation, or amusements, with more delight and pleasure, than to his exercises of devotion, his reading and meditation upon divine subjects, and his prayers and praises, whose soul is not "*athirst for the living God,*" and the "*water of life,*" may assuredly conclude, that he is not arrived at the requisite degree of perfection; that he still hankers after *Mammon*, though he may have some real desires, and earnest resolutions with respect to God.

Secondly, Though this be true in general, and a truth of the greatest practical importance; yet there are some seasons, in which all the theopathic affections, and many, in which those of the most delightful kind, are languid; and that even in persons that are far advanced in purity and perfection. Thus the enthusiastic raptures, which often take place in the beginning of a religious course, by introducing an opposite state, disqualify some; a *Judaical* rigour and exactitude in long exercises, bodily disorders, &c. others, from feeling God to be their present joy and comfort. So that the fervours of devotion are by no means in exact proportion to the degree of advancement in piety: we can by no means make them a criterion of our own progress, or that of others. But then, they are always some presumption; and it is far better that they should have some mixture even of enthusiasm, than not take place at all. As to those, who are in the dry and dejected state, the fear of God is, for the most part, sufficiently vivid in them. Let them, therefore, frequently recollect that the fear of God is a Scripture criterion, and seal of the elect, as well as love. Let them consider, that this trial must be submitted to, as much as any other, till "*patience have her perfect work*;" that it is more purifying than common trials; that the state of fear is far more safe, and a much stronger earnest of salvation, than premature and ecstatic transports; and that, if they continue faithful, it will end in love probably during this life, certainly in another. Lastly, that no feeble-minded person may be left without comfort, if there be any one who doubts, whether he either loves or fears God, finding nothing but dulness, anxiety and scrupulosity within him, he must be referred to his external actions, as the surest criterion of his real intentions, in this confused and disorderly state of the

affections ; and at the same time, admonished not to depend upon his external righteousness, which would breed an endless scrupulosity, and an endeavour after an useless exactitude, but to take refuge in the mercy of God through Jesus Christ.

Lastly, The cultivation of the love of God in ourselves, by the methods here recommended, and all others that suit our state and condition, with a prudent caution to avoid enthusiasm on the one hand, and superstition on the other, is the principal means for preserving us from dejection of every kind, and freeing us if we be fallen into it. Worldly sorrows must by degrees die away, because worldly desires, their sources, will. And their progress will be much accelerated by the impressions of a contrary nature, which gratitude, hope, love towards God, will make upon the mind. As to the dejection, which relates to another world, it generally ends in the opposite state, being its own remedy and cure ; but all direct endeavours after the true and pure love of God must assist. It is much to be wished, that low-spirited persons of all kinds would open themselves without reserve to religious friends, and particularly to such as have passed through the same dark and dismal path themselves ; and, distrusting their judgments, would resign themselves for a time to some person of approved experience and piety. These would be like guardian angels to them ; and as our natures are so communicative, and susceptible of infection, good and bad, they would by degrees infuse something of their own peaceable, cheerful, and devout spirit into them. But all human supports and comforts are to be at last resigned ; we must have “ *no comforter, no God, but one ;*” and happy are they, who make haste towards this central point, in which alone we

can "*find rest to our souls.*"—*Hartley's Observations on Man*, ii. 325.

SECTION IV.

SUBMISSION TO GOD.

I KNOW no duty in religion more generally agreed on, nor more justly required by God Almighty, than a perfect submission to his will in all things; nor do I think any disposition of mind can either please him more, or become us better, than that of being satisfied with all he gives, and contented with all he takes away. None, I am sure, can be of more honour to God, nor of more ease to ourselves; for, if we consider him as our Maker, we cannot contend with him; if as our Father, we ought not to distrust him: so that we may be confident whatever he does is intended for good, and whatever happens that we interpret otherwise, yet we can get nothing by repining, nor save any thing by resisting.

All the precepts of Christianity agree to lead and command us to moderate our passions, to temper our affections towards all things below; to be thankful for the possession, and patient under the loss, whenever he that gave shall see fit to take away. 'Tis at least pious to ascribe all the ill, that befalls us, to our own demerits, rather than to injustice in God; and it becomes us better to adore all the issues of his Providence in the effects, than inquire into the causes; for submission is the only way of reasoning between a creature and its Maker; and contentment in his wit-

is the greatest duty we can pretend to, and the best remedy we can apply to all our misfortunes.—*Sir William Temple's Works*, ii. 97.

The wise and virtuous man is at all times willing that his own private interest should be sacrificed to the public interest of his own particular order or society. He is at all times willing, too, that the interest of this order, or society, should be sacrificed to the greater interest of the state or sovereignty, of which it is only a subordinate part. He should, therefore, be equally willing, that all those inferior interests should be sacrificed to the greater interest of the universe, to the interest of that great society of all sensible and intelligent beings, of which God himself is the immediate administrator and director. If he is deeply impressed with the habitual and thorough conviction, that this benevolent, and all-wise Being can admit into the system of his government no partial evil, which is not necessary for the universal good, he must consider all the misfortunes which may befall himself, his friends, his society, or his country, as necessary for the prosperity of the universe, and, therefore, as what he ought not only to submit to with resignation, but as what he himself, if he had known all the connexions and dependencies of things, ought sincerely and devoutly to have wished for.

Nor does this magnanimous resignation to the will of the great Director of the universe seem, in any respect, beyond the reach of human nature. Good soldiers, who both love and trust their general, frequently march with more gaiety and alacrity to the forlorn station, from which they never expect to return, than they would to one, where there was neither difficulty nor danger. In marching to the latter, they could feel no other sentiment, than that of the dulness of ordinary duty; in marching to the former, they feel

that they are making the noblest exertion, which it is possible for man to make. They know that their general would not have ordered them upon this station, had it not been necessary for the safety of the army, for the success of the war. They cheerfully sacrifice their own little systems to the prosperity of a greater system. They take an affectionate leave of their comrades, to whom they wish all happiness and success, and march out, not only with submissive obedience, but often with shouts of the most joyful exultation, to that fatal but splendid and honourable station to which they are appointed. No conductor of an army can deserve more unlimited trust, more ardent and zealous affection, than the great Conductor of the universe. In the greatest public as well as private disasters, a wise man ought to consider that he himself, his friends and countrymen, have only been ordered upon the forlorn station of the universe; that, had it not been necessary for the good of the whole, they would not have been so ordered; and that it is their duty, not only with humble resignation to submit to this allotment, but to endeavour to embrace it with alacrity and joy. A wise man should surely be capable of doing what a good soldier holds himself, at all times, in readiness to do.—*Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ii. 115.

It is to be wanting entirely in respect for Providence, as it appears to me, to suppose ourselves a prey to those phantoms which we call events: their reality consists in their effect upon the soul; and there is a perfect equality between all situations and all circumstances, not viewed externally, but judged according to their influence upon religious improvement. If each of us would attentively examine the texture of his life, we should find there two tissues perfectly distinct: the one, which appears entirely sub-

ject to natural causes and effects; the other, whose mysterious tendency is not intelligible except by dint of time. It is like a suit of tapestry hangings, whose figures are worked on the wrong side, until, being put in a proper position, we can judge of their effect. We end by perceiving, even in this life, why we have suffered; why we have not obtained what we desired. The melioration of our own hearts reveals to us the benevolent intention, which subjected us to pain; for the prosperities of the earth themselves would have something dreadful about them, if they fell upon us after we had been guilty of great faults: we should then think ourselves abandoned by the hand of Him, who delivered us up to happiness here below, as to our sole futurity. Either every thing is chance, or there is no such thing in the world; and, if there is not, religious feeling consists in making ourselves harmonize with the universal order, in spite of that spirit of rebellion and of usurpation with which selfishness inspires each of us individually.—*De Stael's Germany*, iii. 320.

For myself, this is my consolation, and all that I can offer to others, that the sorrows of this life are but of two sorts, whereof the one hath respect to God, the other to the world. In the first, we complain to God against ourselves for our offences against him, and confess, "Thou, O Lord, art just in all that hath befallen us." In the second, we complain to ourselves against God, as if he had done us wrong, either in not giving us worldly goods and honours answering our appetites, or for taking them again from us, having had them; forgetting that humble and just acknowledgment of Job, "The Lord hath given and the Lord hath taken." To the first of which St. Paul hath promised the blessedness, to the second, death. And, out of doubt, he is either a fool, or ungrateful to God, or

both, that doth not acknowledge, how mean soever his estate be, that the same is yet far greater than that which God oweth him; or doth not acknowledge, how sharp soever his afflictions be, that the same are yet far less than those which are due unto him. And if a heathen wise man call the adversities of the world but “tributes of living,” a wise Christian man ought to know them, and to bear them but as the “tributes of offending.”—*Sir Walter Raleigh's Preface to his History of the World.*

HUMILITY BEFORE GOD.—It follows from the purity of the Scripture precepts, that even the better sort of Christians may be under considerable uncertainties, as to their own state; and that, in many cases, as a man grows better, and consequently sees more distinctly his own impurity, he will have greater fears for himself, and perhaps think that he grows worse. Now the final cause of this is undoubtedly, that we may make our calling and election sure, and lest he that thinketh he standeth, should fall. And yet, as wicked persons, let them endeavour ever so much to stupify themselves, must have frequent forebodings of the judgment that must be passed upon them at the last day, so good persons will generally have great comfort in the midst of their sorrows. The Scripture promises are so gracious and unlimited; the precepts for loving God, and rejoicing in him, so plain and express; and the histories of God's mercies towards great sinners, and the great sins of good men, are so endearing, that whoever reads and meditates upon the Scripture daily, will find *light spring up to him in the midst of darkness; will hope against hope*, that is, will hope for the mercy of God, though he has the greatest doubts and fears in relation to his own virtue, faith, love, hope, and

fly to him as his Father and Saviour, for that very reason. This will beget earnest and incessant prayer, a perpetual care not to offend, and a reference of all things to God. When such a person surveys his own actions, and finds that he does, in many instances of thought, word, and deed, govern himself by the love and fear of God, by a sense of duty, by the gospel motives of future reward and punishment, &c. these are, to him, evident marks that the Spirit of God works with his spirit: he is encouraged to have confidence towards God; and this confidence spurs him on to greater watchfulness and earnestness, if he does not dwell too long upon it. When, on the other hand, he finds many unmortified desires, and many failings in his best words and actions, with some gross neglects perhaps, or even some commissions, this terrifies and alarms him, adds wings to his prayers, and zeal to his endeavours. And it is happy for us in this world of temptations, to be thus kept between hope and fear.

As undue confidence leads to security, and consequently to such sins as destroy this confidence, (unless we be so unhappy as to be able to recal the internal feeling of this confidence without sufficient contrition,) and as the disproportionate fearfulness, which is its opposite, begets vigilance, and thus destroys itself also; whence persons, in the progress of a religious course, are often passing from one extreme to another; so it is difficult for serious persons, in thinking or speaking about the terms of salvation, to rest in any particular point; they are always apt to qualify the last decision, whatever it be, either with some alarming caution, or comfortable suggestion, lest they should mislead themselves or others. This is part of that obscurity and uncertainty, which is our chief guard and security in this state of probation, and

the daily bread of our souls. Let me once more add this necessary observation, viz. that future, eternal happiness, is of infinitely more weight than present comfort ; and, therefore, that we ought to labour infinitely more after purity and perfection, than even after spiritual delights. We are only upon our journey through the wilderness, to the land of Canaan ; and, as we cannot want manna, from day to day, for our support, it is of little concernment whether we have more delicious food. Let us, therefore, *hunger and thirst after righteousness* itself, that so we may first be *filled* with it, and afterwards, in due time, may obtain that *eternal weight of glory*, which will be the reward of it.—*Hartley's Observations on Man*, ii. 414. 417.

We perceive our depravity ; and, if we would speak ingenuously, we must confess that we are slaves to our wills, and that it is with reluctance we submit our conduct to the divine precepts of the Christian religion. The inclinations of the flesh are strong and vigorous : they attach us to the present life ; they acquire a domination over all our faculties, and banish from the will every thought of futurity. The love of our Saviour, who redeemed us, is cold and languid ; and we have but a servile fear of God, who, in our imagination, is too holy. These sentiments are deeply rooted in the dark recesses of our hearts ; every thing conspires to remind us of our weakness, and to convince us that humility is a disposition, which becomes, in the highest degree, creatures so corrupt and imperfect.—*Baron Haller's Letters to his Daughter*, let. 14.

Self-abasement is another moral duty inculcated by this religion only, which requires us to impute even our virtues to the grace and favour of our Creator, and to acknowledge that we can do nothing good by our own powers, unless assisted by his over-ruling influence. This doctrine seems, at first sight, to infringe on our

free-will, and to deprive us of all merit; but, on a closer examination, the truth of it may be demonstrated both by reason and experience, and that in fact it does not impair the one, or depreciate the other: and that it is productive of so much humility, resignation, and dependence on God, that it justly claims a place among the most illustrious moral virtues.—*Soame Jenyns' Works*, iv. 54.

SECTION V.

DEVOTION.

DEVOUT MEDITATION.—The motives to a life of holiness are infinite, not less than the favour or anger of omnipotence, not less than eternity of happiness or misery. But these can only influence our conduct as they gain our attention, which the business or diversions of the world are always calling off by contrary attractions.

The great art, therefore, of piety, and the end for which all the rites of religion seem to be instituted, is the perpetual renovation of the motives to virtue, by a voluntary employment of our mind in the contemplation of its excellence, its importance, and its necessity, which, in proportion as they are more frequently and more willingly revolved, gain a more forcible and permanent influence, till in time they become the reigning ideas, the standing principles of action, and the test by which every thing proposed to the judgment is rejected or approved. To facili-

tate this change of our affections, it is necessary that we weaken the temptations of the world, by retiring at certain seasons from it; for its influence arising only from its presence, is much lessened when it becomes the object of solitary meditation. A constant residence amidst noise and pleasure, inevitably obliterates the impressions of piety; and a frequent abstraction of ourselves into a state, where this life, like the next, operates only upon the reason, will reinstate religion in its just authority, even without those irradiations from above, the hope of which I have no intention to withdraw from the sincere and the diligent.

This is that conquest of the world and of ourselves, which has been always considered as the perfection of human nature; and this is only to be obtained by fervent prayer, steady resolutions, and frequent retirement from folly and vanity, from the cares of avarice, and the joys of intemperance, from the lulling sounds of deceitful flattery, and the tempting sight of prosperous wickedness.—*Johnson, Rambler, No. 7.*

The idea of that divine Being, whose benevolence and wisdom have, from all eternity, contrived and conducted the immense machine of the universe, so as, at all times, to produce the greatest possible quantity of happiness, is certainly, of all the objects of human contemplation, by far the most sublime. Every other thought, necessarily appears mean in the comparison. The man, whom we believe to be principally occupied in this sublime contemplation, seldom fails to be the object of our highest veneration; and, though his life should be altogether contemplative; we often regard him with a sort of religious respect much superior to that, with which we look upon the most active and useful servant of the commonwealth.—*Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments, ii. 117.*

There is another kind of virtue, that may find employment for those retired hours, in which we are altogether left to ourselves, and destitute of company and conversation; I mean that intercourse and communication which every reasonable creature ought to maintain, with the great Author of his being. The man, who lives under an habitual sense of the divine presence, keeps up a perpetual cheerfulness of temper, and enjoys every moment the satisfaction of thinking himself in company with his dearest and best of friends. The time never lies heavy upon him: it is impossible for him to be alone. His thoughts and passions are the most busied at such hours, when those of other men are the most inactive. He no sooner steps out of the world but his heart burns with devotion, dwells with hope, and triumphs in the consciousness of that presence which every where surrounds him; or, on the contrary, pours out its fears, its sorrows, its apprehensions, to the great Supporter of its existence.—*Addison, Spectator, No. 93.*

I needed think no more to convince me of the excellent usefulness for devotion, arising from the distinct and frequent meditating upon the divine perfections, which would continually excite joy, and will never want matter of new discoveries of perfection, in kind and degree, power or act, and so give new, fresh, and increased pleasure; that though in the state of mortality, man knoweth God but darkly, as in a glass, that is, by reflection from creatures; yet, “at his right hand there is fulness of joy, and “pleasures for ever more,” that is, in the state of glory. But there may be, even here, so much joy from meditating upon God, which all other objects cannot parallel, much less exceed or extinguish.—*Dalrymple, Earl of Stair, on the Divine Perfections.*

PRAYER.—In the existence God has given us, and in the benefits which attach us strongly to it, this shews him to be the first and greatest object of our gratitude: And in the established order of things, subject to so many vicissitudes, and yet so constant; this religion shews him to be the reasonable as well as necessary object of our resignation. And, finally, in the wants, distresses, and dangers, which those vicissitudes bring frequently upon us, to be the comfortable object of our hope, in which hope the resignation of nature, will teach us no doubt to address ourselves to the Almighty in a manner consistent with an entire resignation to his will, as some of the heathens did.—*Bolingbroke's Works*, v. 97, as quoted by *Leland*.

However extravagant and absurd the sentiments of certain philosophers may be, they are so obstinately prepossessed in favour of them, that they reject every religious opinion and doctrine, which is not conformable to their system of philosophy. From this source are derived most of the sects and heresies in religion. Several philosophic systems are really contradictory to religion; but, in that case, divine truth ought surely to be preferred to the reveries of men, if the pride of philosophers knew what it was to yield. Should sound philosophy, sometimes seem in opposition to religion, that opposition is more apparent than real; and we must not suffer ourselves to be dazzled with the speciousness of objections.

I begin with considering an objection, which almost all the philosophic systems have started against prayer.

Religion prescribes this as our duty, with an assurance, that God will hear and answer our vows and prayers, provided they are conformable to the precepts which he has given us. Philosophy, on the

other hand, instructs us that all events take place in strict conformity to the course of nature, established from the beginning, and that our prayers can effect no change whatever, unless we pretend to expect that God should be continually working miracles, in compliance with our prayers. This objection has the greater weight, that religion itself teaches the doctrine of God's having established the course of all events; and that nothing can come to pass, but what God foresaw from all eternity. Is it credible, say the objectors, that God should think of altering this settled course of compliance, with any prayers which men might address to him?

But I remark, first, that when God established the course of the universe, and arranged all the events which must come to pass in it, he paid attention to all the circumstances, which should accompany each event; and particularly to the dispositions, to the desires and prayers of every intelligent being: and that the arrangement of all events was disposed, in perfect harmony with all these circumstances. When, therefore, a man addresses to God a prayer worthy of being heard, it must not be imagined, that such a prayer came not to the knowledge of God, till the moment it was formed. That prayer was already heard from all eternity; and if the Father of mercies deemed it worthy of being answered, he arranged the world expressly in favour of that prayer, so that the accomplishment should be a consequence of the natural course of events. It is thus that God answers the prayers of men, without working a miracle.

The establishment of the course of the universe, fixed once for all, far from rendering prayer unnecessary, rather increases our confidence, by conveying to us this consolatory truth, that all our prayers have been already, from the beginning, presented at the

feet of the throne of the Almighty, and that they have been admitted into the plan of the universe, as motives conformably to which events were to be regulated, in subserviency to the infinite wisdom of the Creator.

Can any one believe, that our condition would be better, if God had no knowledge of our prayers, before we presented them, and that he should then be disposed to change, in our favour, the order of the course of nature? This might well be irreconcilable with his wisdom, and inconsistent with his adorable perfections. Would there not then be reason to say, that the world was a very imperfect work; that God was entirely disposed to be favourable to the wishes of men; but, not having foreseen them, was reduced to the necessity of, every instant, interrupting the course of nature, unless he were determined totally to disregard the wants of intelligent beings, which, nevertheless, constitute the principal part of the universe? For, to what purpose create this material world, replenished with so many great wonders, if there were no intelligent beings capable of admiring it, and of being elevated by it to the adoration of God, and to the most intimate union with their Creator, in which undoubtedly their highest felicity consists?

Hence it must absolutely be concluded, that intelligent beings, and their salvation, must have been the principal object, in subordination to which God regulated the arrangement of this world; and we have every reason to rest assured, that all the events which take place in it, are in the most delightful harmony with the wants of all intelligent beings, to conduct them to their true happiness: but without constraint, because of their liberty, which is as essential to spirits as extension is to body. There is, therefore, no ground

for surprise, that there should be intelligent beings, which shall never reach felicity.

In this connexion of spirits with events, consists the divine providence, of which every individual has the consolation of being a partaker; so that every man may rest assured, that, from all eternity he entered into the plan of the universe. How ought this consideration to increase our confidence, and our joy in the providence of God, on which all religion is founded! You see then, that, on this side, religion and philosophy are by no means at variance.—*Euler's Letters to a German Princess*, i. 393.

It was formerly observed, that 'tis from God we have derived all our virtues. The philosophers, therefore, as well as divines, teach us to have recourse frequently to God by ardent prayer, that, while we are exercising ourselves vigorously, he would also adorn us with these virtues, and supply us with new strength. They taught, that no man ever attained true grandeur of mind, without some inspiration from God. Need we add, that the very contemplation of the divine perfections, with that deep veneration which they excite, thanksgivings, praises, confessions of our sins, and prayers, not only increase our devotion and piety, but strengthen all goodness of temper and integrity.—*Hutcheson's Introduction to Moral Philosophy*, book i. chap. 7. § 3.

Though prayer should be the key of the day, and the lock of the night, yet I hold it more needful in the morning, than when our bodies do take their repose. For, howsoever sleep be the image or shadow of death, and when the shadow is so near, the substance cannot be far; yet a man at rest in his chamber is like a sheep impenned in the fold, subject only to the unavoidable and immediate hand of God; where-

as, in the day, when he roves abroad in the open and wide pastures, he is then exposed to many more unthought-of accidents, that contingently and casually occur in the way. Retiredness is more safe than business. Who believes not a ship securer in the bay, than in the midst of the boiling ocean? Besides, the morning to the day, is as youth to the life of a man: if that be begun well, commonly his age is virtuous; otherwise God accepts not the latter service, when his enemy joys in the first dish. He that loves chastity, will never marry her that hath lived a harlot. Why should God take the dry bones, when the devil hath sucked the marrow out?—*Feltham's Resolves*, No. 67.

And such will all your studies be, if you constantly put in practice this my last admonition, which I reserved purposely for this place. It is, that you be careful every night, before you go to bed, or perform your devotions, to withdraw yourself into your closet, or some private part of your chamber, and there call memory, your steward, to account what she has heard or read that day worthy of observation; what she hath laid up, what she spent; how the stock of knowledge improves, where and how she decays. A notable advantage will this bring to your studies at present, and hereafter (if that way employed) to your estate. But if this course be strictly observed each night between God and your soul, there will the true advantage appear. Fail not, therefore, Frank, what employment soever you have, every night, as in the presence of God and his holy angels, to pass an inquisition on your soul, what ill it hath done, what good it hath left undone; what slips, what falls, it hath had that day; what temptations have prevailed upon it, and by what means, or after what manner. Ransack every corner of thy dark heart; and let not the least

peccadillo, or kindness to a sin lurk there; but bring it forth, bewail it, protest against it, detest it, and scourge it by a severe sorrow. Thus, each day's breach between God and your soul being made up, with more quiet and sweet hope thou mayest dispose thyself to rest. Certainly, at last, this inquisition, if steadily pursued, will vanquish all customary sins, whatever they may be. I speak it upon this reason, because I presume thou wilt not have the face to appear before God every night confessing the same offence; and thou wilt forbear it, lest thou mayest seem to mock God, or despise him, which is dreadful but to imagine. This finished, for a delightful close to the whole business of the day, cause your servant to read something that is excellently written or done, to lay you to sleep with it, that, if it may be, even your dreams may be profitable."—*William Lord Russel's Advice to his Son.*

The preparation of the heart is necessary. It may be prepared by elevating views of nature. "The heavens declare the glory of God." Before that powerful and benign Majesty let us bow and worship; views of Providence may, in like manner, prepare the heart: "I wound and I heal; I kill and I make alive." To that Being, in whose hand our life is, and who alone can make us happy, let us devote ourselves. Select passages of Scripture may be used to predispose the heart. Prayer degenerates into rote, if the heart be not prepared. The stated and avowed exercise of devotion is the only remedy against false shame; the strongest arguments cannot overcome it. Let parents, who believe in the efficacy of prayer, and who are yet ashamed to pray, deliver their children from the same temptation. When the habit of praying daily is acquired, devout thoughts associate with the hour of prayer. The impression of

God's presence, often renewed, checks temptation, and strengthens virtue, and establishes tranquillity of mind on a good foundation.—*Lord Kames on the Culture of the Heart.*

Mr. President,

The small progress we have made, after four or five weeks' close attendance and continued reasoning with each other, our different sentiments on almost every question, several of the last producing as many *noes* as *ayes*, is, methinks, a melancholy proof of the imperfection of the human understanding. We, indeed, seem to *feel* our want of political wisdom, since we have been running all about in search of it. We have gone back to ancient history for models of government, and examined the different forms of those republics, which, having been originally formed with the seeds of their own dissolution, now no longer exist: and we have viewed modern states all around Europe, but find none of their constitutions suitable to our circumstances.

In this situation of this assembly, groping, as it were, in the dark, to find political truth, and scarcely able to distinguish it when presented to us, how has it happened, Sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of Lights to illuminate our understandings? In the beginning of the contest with Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayers in this room for the Divine protection! Our prayers, Sir, were heard;—and they were graciously answered. All of us, who were engaged in the struggle, must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favour. To that kind Providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting, in peace, on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten that powerful Friend? Or

do we imagine we no longer need his assistance? I have lived, Sir, a long time; and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth, *that God governs in the affairs of men!* And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the Sacred Writings, that “except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.” I firmly believe this; and I also believe, that without his concurring aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel: we shall be divided by our little, partial, local interests; our projects will be confounded; and we ourselves shall become a reproach and a by-word down to future ages. And, what is worse, mankind may hereafter, from this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing government by human wisdom, and leave it to chance, war, and conquest. I therefore beg leave to move, “That henceforth prayers, imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessing on our deliberations, be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business; and that one or more of the clergy of this city be requested to officiate in that service.”—*Franklin’s Speech in the American Congress.*

FERVENCY IN PRAYER.—The devotee ever endeavours to excite higher degrees of these affections by expatiating on such circumstances in the divine conduct, with respect to man, as naturally awaken them; and he does this without any fear of exceeding: because infinite wisdom and goodness will always justify the sentiment, and free the expression from all charge of hyperbole or extravagance.—*Robison’s Proofs of a Conspiracy, p. 257.*

PERSEVERANCE IN PRAYER.—What are we to do for those unhappy persons, who have neglected to make use of the means of grace in due time, and who are seized by some fatal disease in the midst of their sins? I answer, that we must exhort them to strive to the utmost, to pray that they may pray with faith, with earnestness, with humility, with contrition. As far as the dying sinner has these graces, no doubt they will avail him, either to alleviate his future misery, or to augment his happiness. And it seems plainly to be the doctrine of the Scriptures, that all that can be done, must be done in this life. After death, we enter into a most durable state of happiness or misery. We must here, as in all other cases, leave the whole to God, who judgeth not as man judgeth. Our compassion is as imperfect and erroneous as our other virtues, especially in matters where we ourselves are so deeply concerned. The greatest promises are made to fervent prayer. Let, therefore, not only the dying person himself, but all about him, who are thus moved with compassion for him, fly to God in this so great distress: not the least devout sigh or aspiration can be lost. God accepts the widow's mite, and even a cup of cold water, when bestowed upon a disciple and representative of Christ. And if the prayer, love, faith, &c. either of the sinner himself or of any one else, be sufficiently fervent, he will give him repentance unto salvation. But how shall any of us say this of ourselves? this would be to depend upon ourselves and our own abilities, instead of having faith in Christ alone.—*Hartley's Observations on Man*, ii. 411.

SECTION VI.

PUBLIC WORSHIP.

A neglect of all religious duties leads to a neglect of all moral obligations.—*Rousseau's Emilius*, i. 113.

Religion, of which the rewards are distant, and which is animated only by faith and hope, will glide by degrees out of the mind, unless it be invigorated, and reimproved by external ordinances, by stated calls to worship, and the salutary influence of example.—*Johnson's Life of Milton*.

Frequent the church and the houses of God: let no business invade or intrude upon your religious hours. What you have destined to the service of God is already sacred to him; and cannot, without great profaneness, be alienated from him, and conferred upon others. Use private prayers, as well as go to the public ordinances.—*Marquis of Argyle's Instructions to his Son*.

And that which is to maintain, amongst men, the principles first inculcated, is public worship, an idea as beautiful as simple, and the most proper to vivify all that is vague and abstract in reasoning and instruction: public worship, in assembling men, and turning them, without public shame, to their weaknesses, and in equalizing every individual before the master of the world, will be, in this point of view, a grand lesson of morality; but this worship, besides, habitually reminds some of their duty, and is for others a constant source of consolation; in short, almost all men, astonished and overwhelmed by the ideas of grandeur and infinity, which the appearance of the

universe, and the exercise of their own thoughts, present to them, aspire to find repose in the sentiment of adoration, which unites them in a more intimate manner to God, than the development of their reason ever will.—*Necker's Religious Opinions*, p. 275.

The obligation we are under to worship God, is founded on the two great principles of gratitude and obedience; both of them requiring fundamentally a pure heart and a well disposed mind. But heart-worship is alone not sufficient. There are, over and above, required external signs, testifying to others the sense we have of these duties, and a firm resolution to perform them. That such is the will of God will appear as follows. The principle of devotion, like most of our other principles, partakes of the imperfections of our nature; yet, however faint originally, it is capable of being greatly invigorated by cultivation and exercise. Private exercise is not sufficient. Nature, and consequently the God of nature, require public exercise or public worship: for devotion is infectious, like joy or grief; and by mutual communication in a numerous assembly, is greatly invigorated. A regular habit of expressing publicly our gratitude and resignation, never fails to purify the mind, tending to wean it from every unlawful pursuit.—*Lord Kames's Sketches of Man*, vi. 284.

Jesus says to the woman of Samaria, “The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. But the true worshippers shall worship the Father, both in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him.” To be worshipped in spirit and in truth, with application of mind, and sincerity of heart, was what God henceforth only required. Magnificent temples, and confinement to certain places, were now no longer necessary for his worship, which

by a pure heart might be performed any where. The splendour and distinction of habits, and pomp of ceremonies, and all outside performances, might now be spared. God, who was a spirit, and made known to be so, required none of those, but the spirit only; and that in public assemblies, (where some actions must be open to the view of the world,) all that could appear and be seen, should be done decently, and in order, and to edification; decency, order, and edification, were to regulate all their public acts of worship, and beyond what these required, the outward appearance (which was of little value in the eyes of God) was not to go. Having shut indecency and confusion out of their assemblies, they need not be solicitous about useless ceremonies. Praises and prayer humbly offered up to the Deity, were the worship he now demanded; and in these every one was to look after his own heart, and to know that it was that alone, which God had regard to and accepted.—*Locke on the Reasonableness of Christianity; Works*, vi. 147.

Hitherto we have treated of internal worship. But our nature scarcely relishes any thing in solitude: all our affections naturally discover themselves before others, and infect them as with a contagion. This shews, that God is not only to be worshipped in secret, but in public; which also tends to increase our own devotion, and to raise like sentiments in others, and makes them thus partakers of this sublime enjoyment. This social worship, is not only the natural result of inward piety; but is also recommended by the many advantages redounding from it; as it has a great influence in promoting a general piety; and, from a general sense of religion prevailing in a society, all its members are powerfully excited to a faithful discharge of every duty of life, and restrained

from all injury or wickedness. And hence it is, that mankind have always been persuaded, that religion was of the highest consequence to engage men to all social duties, and to preserve society in peace and safety.

The external worship must be the natural expressions of the internal devotion of the soul; and must therefore consist in celebrating the praises of God; and displaying his perfections to others; in thanksgivings and expressions of our trust in him; in acknowledging his power, his universal providence, and goodness, by prayers for what we need; in confessing our sins, and imploring his mercy; and finally, in committing ourselves entirely to his conduct, government, and correction, with an absolute resignation. — *Hutcheson's Introduction to Moral Philosophy*, b. i. chap. 4. §. 3.

There cannot be a more fatal delusion, than to suppose, that religion is nothing but a divine philosophy in the soul, and that the theopathic affections (of faith, fear, gratitude, hope, trust, resignation, and love) may exist and flourish there, though they be not cultivated by devout exercises and expressions. Experience, and many plain obvious reasons, shew the falsehood and mischievous tendency of this notion; and it follows from the theory of association, that no internal dispositions can remain long in the mind, unless they be perpetually nourished by proper associations, that is, by some external acts.

But, secondly, though God be in himself infinite in power, knowledge, goodness, and happiness, that is, acquainted with all our wants, ready and able to supply them, and incapable of change, through our entreaties and importunities; yet, as he represents himself to us, both in his word and works, in the relation of a Father and Governor, our associated nature compels us,

as it were, to apply to him, in the same way as we do to earthly fathers and governors, and by thus compelling us, becomes a reason for so doing. If God's incomprehensible perfection be supposed to exclude prayer, it will equally exclude all thoughts and discourses concerning him, (for these are all equally short and unworthy of him,) which is direct atheism.

Thirdly, The hypothesis even of mechanism, (or necessity,) though it may seem at first sight to make prayer superfluous and useless ; yet, upon farther consideration, it will be found quite otherwise. For, if all things be conducted mechanically, that is, by means ; then prayer may be the means of procuring what we want, our ignorance of the manner in which things operate, is not the least (smallest) evidence against their having a real operation. If all be conducted mechanically, some means must be made use of for procuring our wants. The analogy of all other things, intimates that these means must proceed in part from man. The analogy taken from the relations of father and governor, suggests prayer. It follows, therefore, according to the mechanical hypothesis, that prayer is one of the principal means, whereby we may obtain our desires.

Fourthly, If all these reasons were set aside, the pressing nature of some of our wants would extort prayers from us, and therefore justify them.

Fifthly, In like manner, the theopathic affections, if they be sufficiently strong, will break forth into prayers and praises, as in the authors of the psalms, and other devout persons.

Sixthly, The Scriptures direct and commend us to pray, "*to pray always, in every thing to give thanks ;* and support the foregoing and such like reasons for

prayer and praise. And this removes all doubts and scruple, if any should remain, from the infinite nature, of God. We may be satisfied from the Scriptures that we have the privilege to pray, to expose all our wants, desires, joys and griefs, to our Creator, and that he will hear us and help us. Public prayer is, a necessary duty, as well as private. By this we publicly profess our obedience to God through Christ; we excite, and are excited by others, to fervency in devotion, and to Christian benevolence, and we have a claim to the promise of Christ to those who are assembled together in his name. The Christian religion has been kept alive, as one may say, during the great corruption and apostacy, by the public worship of God in churches; and it is probable, that religious assemblies will be much more frequent than they now are, whenever it shall please God to put it into the hearts of Christians to proceed to the general conversion of all nations. We ought, therefore, to prepare ourselves for, and hasten unto this glorious time, as much as possible, by joining together in prayers for this purpose; and so much the more, as we see the day approaching.

Lastly, Family prayer, which is something between the public prayers of each church, and the private ones of each individual, must be necessary, since these are. The same reasons are easily applied. And I believe it may be laid down as a certain fact, that no master or mistress of a family can have a true concern for religion, or be a child of God, who does not take care to worship God by family prayer. Let the observation of the fact determine.—*Hartley's Observations on Man*, ii. 331. 335.

A third part of piety is worship, or the outward expression of those pious affections in suitable words and behaviour. Of this great duty I observe, in the

first place, that it is quite natural. Good affections, when strong, as all the pious affections ought to be, have a tendency to express themselves externally: where this does not appear, there is reason to apprehend, that the affections are weak or wanting. If a man is grateful to his benefactor, he will tell him so; if no acknowledgments are made, and no outward signs of gratitude manifest themselves, he will be chargeable with ingratitude. When we admire the wisdom, and love the goodness of a fellow-creature, we naturally shew him respect, and wish to comply with his will, and recommend ourselves to his favour; and we speak of him and to him in terms of esteem and gratitude: and the greater his wisdom and goodness, the more we are inclined to do all this. Now, God's wisdom and goodness are infinite and perfect, and if we venerate these attributes as we ought to do, it will be neither natural nor easy for us so to conceal that veneration, as to prevent its discovering itself externally. It is true, that the omniscient Being knows all our thoughts, whether we give them utterance or not. But if the expressing of them from time to time, in words, is by him required of us as a duty; if it is beneficial to ourselves, and if, as an example, it has good effects upon our fellow-creatures, no argument can be necessary to prove the propriety of the practice.

Let it therefore be considered, that worship, properly conducted, tends greatly to our improvement in every part of virtue. To indulge a pious emotion, to keep it in our mind, to meditate on its object, and with reverence, and in due season to give it vocal expression, cannot fail to strengthen it; whereas, by restraining the outward expression, and thinking of the emotion and its object seldom and slightly, we make it weaker, and may, in time, destroy it. Besides, the

more we contemplate the perfections of God; the more we must admire, love, and adore them; and the more sensible we must be of our own degeneracy, and of the need we have of pardon and assistance. And the wishes we express for that assistance and pardon, if they be frequent and sincere, will incline us to be attentive to our conduct, and solicitous to avoid what may offend him. These considerations alone would recommend external worship, as a most excellent means of improving our moral nature. But Christians know further, that this duty is expressly commanded, and that particular blessings are promised to the devout performance of it. In us, therefore, the neglect of it must be inexcusable and highly criminal.

It being of so great importance, we ought not only to practise this duty ourselves, but also, by precept and example, avoiding, however, all ostentation, to encourage others to do the same. Hence, one obligation to the duty of social and public worship. But there are many others. One arises from the nature and influence of sympathy, by which all our good affections may be strengthened. To join with others in devotion, tends to make us devout, and should be done for that reason. Besides, public worship, by exhibiting a number of persons engaged, notwithstanding their different conditions, in addressing the great Father of all, and imploring his mercy and protection, must have a powerful tendency to cherish in us social virtue, as well as piety. The inequalities of rank and fortune, which take place in society, render it highly expedient, and even necessary, that there should be such a memorial to enforce upon the minds of men, that they are all originally equal, all placed in the same state of trial, all liable to the same wants and frailties, and all equally related, as his accountable creatures, to the Supreme Governor of the universe. Hence let the mean learn

contentment, and the great, humility ; and hence let all learn charity, meekness, and mutual forbearance.

By associating together, men are much improved, both in temper and understanding. Where they live separate, they are generally sullen and selfish, as well as ignorant : where they meet frequently, they become acquainted with one another's character and circumstances, and take an interest in them ; acquire more extensive notions, and learn to correct their opinions, and get the better of their prejudices. They become, in short, more humane, more generous, and more intelligent. Were it not for that rest, which is appointed on the first day of the week, and the solemn meetings which then take place, for the purposes of social worship and religious instruction, the labours of the common people, that is, of the greatest part of mankind, would be insupportable ; most of them would live and die in utter ignorance ; and those, who are remote from neighbours, would degenerate into barbarians. Bad as the world is, there is reason to think it would be a thousand times worse, if it were not for this institution ; the wisdom and humanity of which can never be sufficiently admired, and which, if it were as strictly observed as it is positively commanded, would operate with singular efficacy in advancing public prosperity, as well as private virtue.—*Beattie's Elements of Moral Science*, ii. 81.

BAPTISM.—Baptism doth, in its own nature, suppose the submission of the baptized person to the dominion and lordship of Christ, it being the public rite of initiation into his kingdom, and the solemn admission into the number of his subjects ; so that, whenever baptism hath been used, the lordship or dominion of Christ hath been then either implied or ex-

pressly asserted and owned. From whence it follows, that this article in the Creed, whereby Jesus Christ is professed to be Lord, is coeval with Christianity, and hath been always either expressed or implied in baptism.—*Chancellor Sir Peter King on the Creed.*

THE LORD'S SUPPER.—To sum up what we have said on this subject, we see that, in the first place, the holy communion displays a ceremony highly interesting, and that it inculcates morality, because it requires a pure heart in those who partake of it; that, in the next place, it is an offering of the produce of the earth to the Creator; that it commemorates the sublime and affecting history of the Son of Man; and that, being combined with the recollection of the pass-over, and of the first covenant, it is lost in the obscurity of the early ages; that it is connected with the primitive ideas on the nature of religious and political man, and denotes the original equality of the human race; finally, that it comprises the mystical history of the family of Adam, his fall, his end, his restoration, and his reunion with God. We know not what can be objected against a sacrament which leads through such a circle of ideas, moral, historical, and metaphysical, against a sacrament which begins with youthful years and graces, and which concludes with calling down to earth the divine blessing upon our celebration of a spiritual feast of gratitude and universal love.—*Chateaubriand's Beauties of Christianity*, i. 51.

SECTION VII.

THE SABBATH.

BESIDES the notorious indecency and scandal of permitting any business to be publicly transacted on that day, (the Lord's day,) in a country professing Christianity, and the corruption of morals which usually follows its profanation, the keeping one day in seven holy, as a time of relaxation and refreshment, as well as for public worship, is of admirable service to a state, considered merely as a civil institution.—It humanizes, by the help of conversation and society, the manners of the lower classes; which would otherwise degenerate into a sordid ferocity, and savage selfishness of spirit. It enables the industrious workman to pursue his occupation, in the ensuing week, with health and cheerfulness. It imprints on the minds of the people that sense of their duty to God, so necessary to make them good citizens; but which yet would be worn out and defaced by an unremitted continuance of labour, without any stated times of recalling them to the worship of their Maker.—*Blackstone's Commentaries*, iv. 63.

We may conclude, from these observations, that, so far from finding fault with religion for appointing a day of rest, devoted every week to public worship, we ought to acknowledge, with pleasure, that such an institution is a benevolent act, extended to the most numerous class of the inhabitants of the earth, the most deserving our consideration and protection; from which we require so much, and return so little:

towards that unfortunate class, whose youth and maturity the rich profit by, and abandon them when the hour is come, when they have no more strength left; but to enable them to pray and weep.—*Necker's Religious Opinions*, p. 205.

This lessens not the force of our obligation to keep this day in a proper manner; that is, to abstain from labour, and all worldly cares and occupations, and to employ it in acts of devotion, charity, and hospitality; for which we have the example of Christ and his apostles, and of every Christian church from their times to the present day. The excellence, likewise, of the institution itself cannot fail to recommend it; for certainly there never was any other so well calculated to promote the interests of piety and virtue, to call off the worldly-minded from the perpetual toils of ambition and avarice, and to give leisure to those, who are better disposed, to improve and cultivate those better dispositions; to afford relief to the poor from incessant labour, and to the rich from continual dissipation; and to produce some sense of religion in the vulgar, and some appearance of it in the great.—*Soame Jenyns' Works*, iv. 177.

The sacred intention of the Sabbath—so positive a command, from the beginning, prior to any revelation to Abraham, and prior to the law given to Moses, has every argument, from sound reason and philosophy, besides the positive divine injunction, to recommend it to our admiration, as well as to lead us to an obedience to it.

It has been admirably remarked by one, who well understood the world*, and had narrowly observed the latent and extensive operation of those springs and causes which influence human manners, “that,

* Addison.

if to keep holy the *seventh day* were only a human institution, it would have been the best method that could have been thought of for the polishing and civilizing of mankind."

To the serious and truly considerate, it cannot but be further most obvious, how exceedingly advantageous the constant habit of appropriating a regular stated portion of time for deep religious consideration and meditation must be; and whoever tries the experiment of making the seventh day *that*, which ever was the best part of the observance of it, a regular allotment of some hours to reflection, meditation, and humble prayer, and to the reading of the Holy Scriptures, will indeed find reason, from the inmost convictions of his heart and mind, to rejoice, and to thank God that such a beneficial institution was ever appointed.

And instead of wishing *the Sabbath gone*, (as mistaken men among the Jews did,) and instead of deeming the observance of it a wearisome labour, (which it becomes only, as the reward of dull, unmeaning formality,) will indeed find *the Sabbath a delight*; and will find the most gratifying and pleasant enlargement of apprehension, and a vast increase of new and solacing ideas the reward of such honest perseverance; whilst he will learn, with holy fear and gratitude, to apprehend the real presence of THAT GREAT, AND TREMENDOUS, AND GRACIOUS BEING, from whom indeed we can never be separated, (*though he be a God that hideth himself,*) and to whom we may ever have access through the reconciling mediation of *him who hath delivered us from the power of evil.*—*Edward King's Morsels of Criticism*, iii. 176.

I have, by long and sound experience, found, that the due observance of this day, and of the duties of it, have been of singular comfort and advantage to

me ; I doubt not it will prove so to you. God Almighty is the Lord of our time, and lends it to us ; and, as it is but just we should consecrate this part of that time to him ; so I have found, by a strict and diligent observation, that a due observation of the duty of this day hath ever had joined to it a blessing upon the rest of my time ; and the week, that hath been so begun, hath been blessed and prosperous to me ; and, on the other side, when I have been negligent of the duties of this day, the rest of the week hath been unsuccessful and unhappy to my own secular employments ; so that I could easily make an estimate of my successes in my own secular employments the week following, by the manner of my passing of this day : and this I do not write lightly or inconsiderately, but upon a long and sound observation and experience.—*Sir Matthew Hale's Letter to his Children.*—*Contemplations*, i. 425.

SECTION VIII.

PRINCIPLES OF DUTY.

DUTY OF ASCERTAINING THE TRUTH.—“It is impious,” said they (certain latitudinarians in religion) “to endeavour to reduce all men to uniformity of opinion upon this subject. Men’s minds are as various as their faces, God has made them so ; and it is to be presumed that he is pleased to be addressed in different languages, by different names, and with the consenting ardour of disagreeing sects.” Thus did these reas-

oners confound the majesty of truth with the deformity of falsehood ; and suppose that that Being, who was all truth, took delight in the errors, the absurdities, and the vices (for all falsehood in some way or other engenders vice) of his creatures. At the same time, they were employed in unnerving that activity of mind, which is the single source of human improvement. If truth and falsehood be in reality upon a level, I shall be very weakly employed in a strenuous endeavour, either to discover truth for myself, or to impress it upon others *.—*Godwin's Political Justice*, i. 181.

DUTY OF DISSEMINATING TRUTH.—I am bound to disseminate, without reserve, all the principles, with which I am acquainted, and which it may be of importance to mankind to know ; and this duty it behoves me to practise upon every occasion, and with the most persevering constancy. I must disclose the whole system of moral and political truth, without suppressing any part, under the idea of its being too bold and paradoxical ; and thus depriving the whole of that complete and irresistible evidence, without which its effects must always be feeble, partial, uncertain †.—*Godwin's Political Justice*, i. 197.

DUTY OF ENLIGHTENING OUR OWN CONSCIENCE.—Nothing is more common, than for individuals and societies of men to allege, that they have acted to the

* It is scarcely necessary to remind the reader, how applicable is the reasoning in this passage to the Christian duty, so often held up to ridicule, of keeping pure, and conveying pure, the great principles of the faith.

† This obligation, which reason teaches, to diffuse the knowledge which reason discovers, must hold *a fortiori* in the case of every man, who believes in revealed truth, which must be so much more worthy of dissemination, and so much more important to mankind.

best of their judgment, that they have done their duty, and therefore, that their conduct, even should it prove to be mistaken, is nevertheless virtuous. This appears to be an error. An action, though done with the best intention in the world, may have nothing in it of the nature of virtue. In reality the most essential part of virtue consists in the incessantly seeking to inform ourselves more accurately upon the subject of utility and right*. Whoever is greatly misinformed respecting them, is indebted for his error to a defect in his philanthropy and zeal. Secondly, since absolute virtue may be out of the power of a human being; it becomes us, in the mean time, to lay the greatest stress upon a virtuous disposition, which is not attended with the same ambiguity. A virtuous disposition is of the utmost consequence, since it will, in the majority of instances, be productive of virtuous actions; since it tends, in exact proportion to the quantity of virtue, to increase our discernment, and improve our understanding; and since, if it were universally propagated, it would immediately lead to the great end of virtuous actions, the purest and most exquisite happiness of intelligent beings. But a virtuous disposition is principally generated by the uncontrolled exercise of private judgment, and the right conformity of every man to the dictates of his conscience.—*Godwin's Political Justice*, i. 102.

ACTIVE DUTY THE BEST MEAN OF FORMING VIRTUOUS HABITS.—If the foregoing observations be well founded, it will follow, that habits of virtue are not to be formed in retirement, but by mingling in

* The reasoning, it is obvious, equally applies to whatever object may be considered as the foundation of virtue; such as obedience to the will of God.

the scenes of active life, and that an habitual attention to exhibitions of fictitious distress, is not merely useless to the character, but positively hurtful.

It will not, I think, be disputed, that the frequent perusal of pathetic compositions diminishes the uneasiness which they are naturally fitted to excite. A person who indulges habitually in such studies, may feel a growing desire of his usual gratification, but he is every day less and less affected by the scenes, which are presented to him. I believe it would be difficult to find an actor long hackneyed on the stage, who is capable of being completely interested by the distresses of a tragedy. The effect of such compositions and representations, in rendering the mind callous to actual distress, is still greater; for, as the imagination of the poet almost always carries him beyond truth and nature, a familiarity with the tragic scenes which he exhibits, can hardly fail to deaden the impression produced by the comparatively trifling sufferings, which the ordinary course of human affairs presents to us. In real life, a provision is made for this gradual decay of sensibility, by the proportional decay of other passive impressions, which have an opposite tendency, and by the additional force which our active habits are daily acquiring. Exhibitions of fictitious distress, while they produce the former change on the character, have no influence in producing the latter: on the contrary, they tend to strengthen those passive impressions which counteract beneficence. The scenes, into which the novelist introduces us, are, in general, perfectly unlike those which occur in the world. As his object is to please, he removes from his descriptions every circumstance which is disgusting, and presents us with the histories of elegant and dignified distress. It is not such scenes that human life exhibits. We have to

act, not with refined and elevated characters, but with the mean, the illiterate, the vulgar, and the profligate. The perusal of fictitious history, has a tendency to increase that disgust, which we naturally feel at the concomitants of distress, and to cultivate a false refinement of taste, inconsistent with our condition as members of society. Nay, it is possible for this refinement to be carried so far, as to withdraw a man from the duties of life, and even from the sight of those distresses which he might alleviate. And, accordingly, many are to be found, who, if the situations of romance were realized, would not fail to display the virtues of their favourite characters, whose sense of duty is not sufficiently strong to engage them in the humble and private scenes of human misery.

To these effects of fictitious history we may add, that it gives no exercise to our active habits. In real life, we proceed from the passive impression to those exertions, which it was intended to produce. In the contemplation of imaginary sufferings, we stop short at the impression, and whatever benevolent dispositions we may feel, we have no opportunity of carrying them into action.

From these reasonings, it appears, that an habitual attention to exhibitions of fictitious distress, is in every view calculated to check our moral improvement. It diminishes that uneasiness, which we feel at the sight of distress, and which prompts us to relieve it. It strengthens that disgust, which the loathsome concomitants of distress excite in the mind, and which prompts us to avoid the sight of misery; while, at the same time, it has no tendency to confirm those habits of active beneficence, without which, the best dispositions are useless.—*Stewart's Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, i. 517.

DUTY OF ACTIVE GOODNESS.—All virtue consists in *effort*—effort to avoid evil and to obtain good : but how many are there, who pass speciously through the world, without having made any considerable moral effort in their lives? An easy situation, a happy constitution of body and mind, tranquil times, indulgent friends, free many from the necessity of exciting any of the energies of the soul, either in acting or suffering. Such persons may perhaps merit no particular censure ;—“ *explent numerum,*” they fill up the number, of which society is composed ; but let not the mere negation of what would be scandalous or punishable—the practice of the common decencies of life, be exalted into virtue! The criterion of virtue, which it is most important for mankind to establish, is the *good* a man does ; not the absolute quantity, but the proportion relative to the means he possesses ; and not the indolent and involuntary, but the active and intentional good. A rich man cannot spend his fortune in personal gratifications, without imparting much benefit to the neighbouring poor ; but that may be no part of his purpose ; or, if it has occasionally given a particular direction to his plans, the exertion is too trifling to deserve applause. But if, foregoing the natural love of ease and enjoyment, he makes use of the advantages of his situation to carry on some great design of public utility, he may claim the praise of substantial goodness, and in so much a higher degree as the sacrifices he makes are greater. Let the measure then be the good done, combined with the effort made in doing it.—*Aikin's Letters to his Son*, ii. 33. 43.

DUTY OF READING THE SCRIPTURES.—To what I have said, I shall add, that, notwithstanding the discouragements, the difficulties, some obscure texts of

Scripture may offer, we ought daily to read some portion of Scripture, though (as Naaman dipped himself six times in Jordan without being cured) we should not find an immediate benefit. For in diseases, though we cannot relish it, convenient nourishment must be taken. And as the Eunuch, (Acts vi. 30,) we ought to read, though we understand not some texts of Scripture, and fix them upon our memories, till our understanding can attain to the knowledge of them. The word of God is a seed, by which we are born again; and though a seed may seem dead and buried under ground, yet it will soon spring up unto a plentiful harvest. But we ought not only to remember several texts of Scripture; but to have them in readiness; and, as David took the sword of Goliath from near the ephod to defend himself from his enemies, so Christians ought to be armed with spiritual weapons, and wear the sword of the spirit, and to have it in readiness on all occasions without the help of a concordance. "The word of Christ," (Coloss. iii. 16.) must not be slightly entertained in our minds, but must "dwell there richly;" and the word, which is "able to save our souls," must be "engrafted," (James i. 21.) And we are so indisposed to admit, and apt to deface religious impressions, that we ought to converse constantly with what may tend to make us lead the whole course of our lives piously.—*Honourable Robert Boyle's Theological Works.*

DUTY OF FOLLOWING THE DIVINE DECLARATIONS.—Christians, therefore, who humbly receive these, and the many other revelations of Christ's divinity, have the less difficulty in acknowledging the doctrines of the ancient catholic churches, and the declarations of our creeds. But let all other men, like-

wise, who profess to believe in the name of Christ, earnestly inquire in the *first* place, as the *first* means of progress to the true faith, whether they are really “willing” (for this is given as the true proof of faith, *εαν τις θελη*) to conform themselves to the will of God, as revealed in all the most obvious declarations and injunctions of holy Scripture, and more particularly to the purity which is expressly called the “will of God,” namely “the sanctification of their bodies,” which cannot otherwise be capable of becoming “temples of the Holy Ghost;” an indispensable state both of body and mind for all Christians to maintain; for, in that case, they may assuredly rely on God’s absolute promise through Christ, that if “any one shall be willing to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak,” said our Lord, “of myself.”—*Granville Sharp on the Greek Article.*

REGARD TO THE WILL OF GOD.—A virtuous nature impels the agent to a compliance with the commands of God, and then the understanding suggests to him the secondary motive of compliance, from the precept of the Supreme Being; this is what I mean by a primary and a secondary motive. If the primary motive to good is the pure effect of nature in any person, it is the immediate work of God: if it proceeds from the cultivation of it by the free agent to whom it belongs, that action alone must draw the approbation of the Creator; if it proceed from the influence of regeneration, it thereby acquires the character of the highest human perfection. These primitive causes, as I may call them, of this primary motive, are hid from the eyes of man; but the good effect resulting from them is palpable to every one. This primary motive is what I call the most approved of God; and,

morally speaking, the most meritorious in man. To this the secondary motive is perfectly analogous; it concurs with it with all its force, like two mechanical powers which act in the same direction; whereas, if the primary motive proceeds from a vicious disposition, it must be checked by the secondary, and consequently the force of action must be weaker.

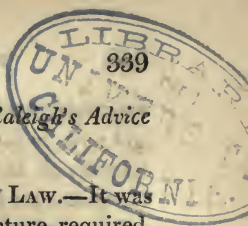
What other idea have we of a saint upon earth, than of a person, who, for every benefit he receives, and in the instant of his good fortune, even before he can have time to taste of it, throws himself with raptures upon his knees to express his acknowledgments to God; who flies to him for assistance in danger or distress, before he can think of applying his natural force to work his deliverance; who feels an inward joy upon the approach of the seventh day, and an inexpressible delight in the prospect of giving himself wholly up to the contemplation of his God, without implying any avocation from the other duties of his creation; who honours and obeys, with tenderness and inborn affection, the natural authors of his existence; who loves, like his brother, every individual of his own species without affectation; who rejoices in acts of benevolence, and who shudders at every act of oppression or injustice; who shares in the pleasures of him who possesses a beautiful wife, from the contemplation of his happiness, not from a prospect of defiling the marriage bed: who, in a word, is naturally led to every exercise of mutual virtue, from the direct impulse of a refined nature.

I have said above, that upon every occasion, where the will of God is manifested, in such a manner as not to convey the reason of the institution, there our reason also demands our obedience, from the plain analogy that every such command must bear to the spirit of his government. The same thing is true of

other precepts of belief, where the knowledge of the subject is incompatible with the extent of our reasonable faculties. It is sufficient to know, that the article of faith, as it is called, comes from God. It is absurd to inquire into such matters; and equally absurd to enter into disputes and explanations concerning things, which are conveyed by words, the inadequate archetypes of the most imperfect ideas. Wherever God has spoken, there is truth; reason alone must decide whether he has spoken or not.—*Sir James Stewart's Works*, vi. 83.

I cannot fancy to myself what the law of nature means, but the law of God. How should I know I ought not to steal, I ought not to commit adultery, unless somebody had told me so? Surely 'tis because I have been told so. 'Tis not because I think I ought not to do them, nor because you think I ought not; if so, our minds might change; whence, then, comes the restraint? From a higher power. Nothing else can bind: I cannot bind myself, for I may untie myself again; nor an equal cannot bind me, for we may untie one another; it must be a superior power, even God Almighty.—*Selden's Table Talk*, No. 92.

Now, for the world, I know it too well to persuade thee to dive into the practices thereof; rather stand upon thine own guard, against all that tempt thee thereunto, or may practise upon thee in thy conscience, thy reputation, or thy purse; resolve that no man is wise or safe, but he that is honest. Serve God; let him be the author of all thy actions. Commend all thy endeavours to him, that must either wither or prosper them. Please him with prayer, lest, if he frown, he confound all thy fortunes and labours, like the drops of rain on the sandy ground. Let my experienced advice, and fatherly instructions sink deep into thine heart. So God direct thee in all his ways, and fill



thy heart with his grace.—*Sir Walter Raleigh's Advice to his Son.*

PERFECT OBEDIENCE DUE TO GOD'S LAW.—It was such a law as the purity of God's nature required, and must be the law of such a creature as man, unless God would have made him a rational creature, and not required him to have lived by the law of reason; but would have countenanced in him irregularity and disobedience to that light which he had, and that rule which was suitable to his nature; which would have been to have authorized disorder, confusion, and wickedness in his creatures: for that this law was the law of reason, or, as it is called, of nature, we shall see by and by: and if rational creatures will not live up to the rule of their reason, who shall excuse them? If you will admit them to forsake reason in one point, why not in another? Where will you stop? To disobey God in any part of his commands, (and 'tis he that commands what reason does) is direct rebellion; which, if dispensed with in any point, government and order are at an end; and there can be no bounds set to the lawless exorbitancy of unconfined man. The law therefore was, as St. Paul tells us, Rom. vii. 12, "holy, just, and good," and such as it ought, and could not otherwise be.—*Locke on the Reasonableness of Christianity; Works, vi. 11.*

EXTENT AND MOTIVES OF CHRISTIAN PRACTICE.—It is the grand essential practical characteristic of true Christians, that, relying on the promises made to repenting sinners, of acceptance through the Redeemer, they have renounced and abjured all other masters, and have cordially and unreservedly devoted themselves to God. This is indeed the very figure, which baptism daily represents to us: like the father of Hannibal, we there bring our infant to the altar,

we consecrate him to the service of *his proper owner*, and vow, *in his name*, eternal hostilities against all the enemies of his salvation. After the same manner, Christians are become the sworn enemies of sin; they will henceforth hold no parley with it, they will allow it in no shape; they will admit it to no composition; the war, which they have denounced against it, is cordial, universal, irreconcilable.

But this is not all. It is now their determined purpose to yield themselves, without reserve, to the reasonable service of their rightful Sovereign. "They are not their own;" their bodily and mental faculties, their natural and acquired endowments, their substance, their authority, their time, their influence; all these they consider as belonging to them, not for their own gratification, but as so many instruments to be consecrated to the honour, and employed in the service of God. This must be the master principle, to which every other must be subordinate. Whatever may have been hitherto their ruling passion; whatever, hitherto, their leading pursuit, whether sensual or intellectual, of science, of taste, of fancy, or of feeling, it must now possess but a secondary place; or rather; (to speak more correctly,) it must exist only at the pleasure, and be put altogether under the control and direction, of its true and legitimate Superior.

Thus it is the prerogative of Christianity "to bring into captivity *every thought* to the obedience of Christ." They, who really feel its power, are resolved, in the language of Scripture, "to live no longer to themselves, but to him that died for them." They know, indeed, their own infirmities; they know that the way, on which they have entered, is strait and difficult; but they know, too, the encouraging assurance, "they who wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength;" and, relying on this animating declaration, they deliberately purpose, that, so far as they

may be able, the grand governing maxim of their future lives shall be, *to do all to the glory of God.*

But, while the servants of Christ continue in this life, glorious as is the issue of their labours, they receive but too many humiliating memorials of their remaining imperfections, and they daily find reason to confess, that they cannot do the things that they would. Their *determination*, however, is still unshaken; and it is the fixed desire of their hearts to improve in *all holiness*; and this, let it be observed, on many accounts. Various passions concur to push them forward; they are urged on, by the dread of failure, in this arduous but necessary work; they trust not, where their all is at stake, to lively emotions or to internal impressions, however warm; the example of Christ is their pattern, the word of God is their rule; there they read that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” It is the description of real Christians, that they are gradually “changed into the image” of their divine Master; and they dare not allow themselves to believe their title sure, except so far as they can discern in themselves the growing traces of this blessed resemblance.

It is not merely, however, the fear of misery, and the desire of happiness, by which they are actuated in their endeavours to excel in all holiness; they love it for its own sake: nor is it *solely* by the sense of self-interest (this, though often unreasonably condemned, is but, it must be confessed, a principle of an inferior order) that they are influenced in their determination to obey the will and to cultivate the favour of God. This determination has its foundations, indeed, in a deep and humiliating sense of his exalted majesty and infinite power, and of their own extreme inferiority and littleness, attended with a settled conviction of its being their duty, as his creatures, to sub-

mit, in all things, to the will of their great Creator. But these awful impressions are relieved and ennobled by an admiring sense of the infinite perfections and infinite amiableness of the divine character; animated by a confiding though humble hope of his fatherly kindness and protection, and quickened by the grateful recollection of immense and continually increasing obligations. This is the Christian love of God! A love compounded of admiration, of preference, of hope, of trust, of joy; chastised by reverential awe, and wakeful with continual gratitude.

I would here express myself with caution, lest I should inadvertently wound the heart of some weak, but sincere believer. The elementary principles, which have been above enumerated, may exist in various degrees and proportions. A difference in natural disposition, in the circumstances of the past life, and in numberless other particulars, may occasion a great difference in the predominant tempers of different Christians. In one, the love, in another, the fear of God, may have the ascendancy; trust in one, and in another, gratitude; but, in greater or less degrees, a cordial complacency in the sovereignty, an exalted sense of the perfections, a grateful impression of the goodness, and a humble hope of the favour of the divine Being, are common to them all. Common—the determination to devote themselves, without exceptions, to the service and glory of God. Common—the desire of holiness, and of continual progress towards perfection. Common—an abasing consciousness of their own unworthiness, and of their many remaining infirmities, which interpose so often to corrupt the simplicity of their intentions, to thwart the execution of their purer purposes, and frustrate the resolutions of their better hours.—*Wilberforce's Practical View, &c.* chap. iv. § 1.

EPITOME OF CHRISTIAN DUTY.—“ As then we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so let us walk in him ; rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith.” The unreserved surrender of the whole heart to God will bring with it whatever is really necessary for safety, or for happiness. In his hands are all the events of all creation ; and by him they are ordained, disposed, employed, to produce the ultimate and inconceivable felicity of his faithful servants. Our part is exceedingly plain and simple ; to pray, to watch, to put our trust in him ; to study and to do his will ; to live under the constant sense and protecting shadow of his Providence ; to have a growing love of his goodness, and a cheerful confidence in his unfailing care and kindness ; to be the willing instruments of his power, yielded up, in every faculty, to his directing influence. Thus, our regards fixed on our Redeemer, may we walk, with an even step, along the rough and twilight paths of life ; neither dazzled with the vanities, nor dismayed with the dangers, that surround us : thus shall we be enabled to receive and to survey the changeful events of this world with an heavenly tranquillity ; sharing, indeed, its labours, tasting its satisfactions, and sympathizing with every sorrow, yet spiritual, cheerful, and serene. And thus, after a few years of mingled joy and suffering, shall we arrive at that land, where fear and conflict, where doubt and disappointment, shall be no more ; “ into which no enemy enters, and from which no friend departs.”—*Bowdler's Remains*, vol. ii.

The first part of the history is a general account of the state of the world at the beginning of the world. It is divided into three parts: the first part is a general account of the world at the beginning of the world; the second part is a general account of the world at the beginning of the world; the third part is a general account of the world at the beginning of the world.

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APPENDIX.

I.

TRADITIONAL AND HISTORICAL TESTIMONIES TO THE TRUTH OF SCRIPTURE HISTORY.

ALL MANKIND DESCENDED FROM ONE RACE.—
There is no proof that the existence of man is much more recent in America, than in the other continent. Within the tropics, the strength of vegetation, the breadth of rivers, and partial inundations, have presented powerful obstacles to the migration of nations. The extensive countries of the north of Asia are as thinly peopled as the savannahs of New Mexico and Paraguay; nor is it necessary to suppose that the countries first peopled are those, which offer the greatest mass of inhabitants. The problem of the first population of America, is no more the province of history, than the question on the origin of plants and animals, and on the distribution of organic germs, are that of natural science. History, in carrying us back to the earliest epochas, instructs us, that almost every part of the globe is occupied by men who think themselves aborigines, because they are ignorant of their origin. Among a multitude of nations who have

succeeded, or have been incorporated with each other, it is impossible to discover, with precision, the first basis of population, that primitive stratum, beyond which the region of cosmogonical tradition begins. The nations of America, except those which border on the polar circle, form a single race, characterized by the formation of the skull, the colour of the skin, the extreme thinness of the beard, and straight and glossy hair. The American race bears a very striking resemblance to that of the Mongol nations, which include the descendants of the Hiong-nu, known heretofore by the name of Huns, the Kalkas, the Kalmucs, and the Burats. It has been ascertained, by late observations, that not only the inhabitants of Unalashka, but several tribes of South America, indicate, by the osteological characters of the head, a passage from the American to the Mongul race. When we shall have more completely studied the brown men of Africa, and that swarm of nations, who inhabit the interior and north-east of Asia, and who are vaguely described, by systematic travellers, under the name of Tartars and Tshoudes; the Caucasian, Mongul, American, Malay, and Negro races, will appear less insulated, and we shall acknowledge, in this great family of the human race, one single organic type, modified by circumstances which perhaps will ever remain unknown*.—*Humboldt's Researches*, &c. i. 11.

THE ORIGINAL STATE OF THE HUMAN RACE.—
We can hardly conceive by what gradation it would be possible, from the cry of the savage, to arrive at

* It is obvious to remark, from the above citation, how the progress of human knowledge has tended, on this and many other points, to confirm those statements of Scripture, which partial discoveries had seemed to contradict.

the perfection of the Greek language; it would be said, that, in the progress necessary to traverse such an infinite distance, every step would cross an abyss; we see, in our days, that savages do not civilize themselves, and that it is from neighbouring nations that they are taught, with great labour, what they themselves are ignorant of; one is much tempted, therefore, to think, that a primitive nation did establish the human race; and whence was that people formed, if not from revelation? All nations have, at all times, expressed regret for the loss of a state of happiness, which preceded the period in which they existed: whence arises this idea, so widely spread? Will it be said, it is an error? Errors, that are universal, are always founded upon some truth, altered and disfigured perhaps, but bottomed on facts concealed in the night of ages, or some mysterious powers of nature.

Those, who attribute the civilization of the human race to the effects of physical wants uniting men with one another, will have difficulty in explaining how it happens, that the moral culture of the most ancient nations is more poetical, more favourable to the fine arts, in a word, more nobly useless, in the relations of materialism, than all the refinements of modern civilization. The philosophy of the Indians is ideal, and their religion mystical: certainly it is not the necessity of maintaining order in society, which has given birth to that philosophy, or to that religion.

The magnificent system, which considers civilization as having for its origin a religious revelation, is supported by an erudition, of which the partisans of the materialist doctrines are seldom capable: to be wholly devoted to study, is to be almost an idealist at once.—*De Stael's Germany*, iii. 123.

LONGEVITY OF THE HUMAN RACE.—Would it even be absurd to suppose this quality of melioration in the human species, as susceptible of an indefinite advancement; to suppose, that a period must one day arrive, when death will be nothing more than the effect either of extraordinary accidents, or of the slow and gradual decay of the vital powers; and that the duration of the middle space, of the interval between the birth of man and this decay, will itself have no assignable limit? Certainly man will not become immortal; but may not the distance between the moment in which he draws his first breath, and the common term when, in the course of nature, without malady, without accident, he finds it impossible any longer to exist, be necessarily protracted?—Thus, in the instance we are considering, we are bound to believe, that the mean duration of human life will for ever increase, unless its increase be prevented by physical revolutions of the system; but we cannot tell what is the bound, which the duration of human life can never exceed; we cannot even tell whether there be any circumstance in the laws of nature, which has determined and laid down its limit*.—*Condorcet's Historical View of the Progress of the Human Mind*, p. 368.

* The longevity of the Patriarchal times is thus acknowledged, at least, not to be inconsistent with probability, or the laws of nature; and a philosopher, who disbelieves that longevity, with all the historical evidence and other collateral testimonies to its truth, as a fact which has been witnessed, contemplates its future reality, to a still more unlimited extent, upon mere grounds of theoretical conjecture. For, the increasing longevity of man is not, like that of the antediluvian world, a fact confirmed by experience; and its most extraordinary instances are so anomalous as to point out no systematic and uniform cause.

THE DELUGE.—These traditions, (of the Mexicans,) we here repeat, remind us of others of high and venerable antiquity. The sight of marine substances, found even on the loftiest summits, might give men, who have had no communication, the idea of great inundations, which for a certain time extinguished organic life on the earth, but ought we not to acknowledge the traces of a common origin wherever cosmogonical ideas, and the first traditions of nations, offer striking analogies, even in the minutest circumstances? Does not the humming bird of Tezpi remind us of Noah's dove, that of Deucalion, and the birds, which, according to Berosus, Xisuthrus sent out from his ark, to see whether the waters had run off, and whether he might erect altars to the protecting divinities of Chaldea?—*Humboldt's Researches*, &c. i. 65.

ANCIENT HISTORY CONFORMABLE TO THE SACRED RECORDS.—In the first place, we cannot surely deem it an inconsiderable advantage, that all our historical researches have confirmed the Mosaic accounts of the primitive world, and our testimony on that subject ought to have the greater weight, because, if the result of our observations had been totally different, we should, nevertheless, have published them, not indeed with equal pleasure, but with equal confidence: for *truth is mighty*, and, whatever be its consequences, *must always prevail*: but, independently of our interest in corroborating the multiplied evidences of revealed religion, we could scarcely gratify our minds with a more useful and rational entertainment, than the contemplation of those wonderful revolutions, in kingdoms and states, which have happened within little more than four thousand years; revolutions almost as fully demonstrative of an all-ruling Provi-

dence, as the structure of the universe, and the final causes, which are discernible in its whole extent, and even in its remotest parts.—*Lord Teignmouth's Life of Sir William Jones*, p. 295.

II.

PHYSIOLOGICAL AND GEOLOGICAL TESTIMONIES TO THE MOSAIC ACCOUNT OF THE CREATION.

THUS ends this noble account of the creation ; which surely may now be concluded to be perfectly consistent, in every, the minutest parts, with the *soundest philosophical principles* that have come to our knowledge, or that we ever can be made acquainted with. If it has hitherto been thought erroneous, or irrational, by presumptuous men ; it has been so judged of, not from any real defect in itself, or in the words used, but merely in consequence of the ignorance, and misinterpretation, which have prevailed in the world. The consideration whereof should teach us modesty and reverence ; and to be more diffident as to any misapprehensions we may still have remaining, concerning other parts of the contents of God's most holy word ; and to conceive that *such parts*, instead of being inconsistent with truth, or with our best philosophical informations, may even lead us to *further discoveries*, and to a greater elevation and enlargement of the faculties of the human soul.—*Edward King's Morsels of Criticism*, i. 199.

Neither an attentive examination of the geological

constitution of America, nor reflections on the equilibrium of the fluids, that are diffused over the surface of the globe, lead us to admit, that the new continent emerged from the waters at a later period than the old. We discern in the former the same succession of stony strata, that we find in our own hemisphere; and it is probable, that in the mountains of Peru, the granites, the micaceous schists, or the different formations of gypsum and gritstone, existed originally at the same periods, as the rocks of the same denominations in the Alps of Switzerland. The whole globe appears to have undergone the same catastrophes. At a height superior to Mount Blanc on the summit of the Andes, we find petrified sea-shells; fossil bones of elephants are spread over the equinoctial regions; and, what is very remarkable, they are not discovered at the feet of the palm-trees in the burning plains of the Orinoco, but on the coldest and most elevated regions of the Cordilleras.—*Humboldt's Researches.*

Although the Mosaic account of the creation of the world is an inspired writing, and consequently rests on evidence totally independent of human observation and experience, still it is interesting, and in many respects important, to know that it coincides with the various phenomena observable in the mineral kingdom. The structure of the earth, and the mode of distribution of extraneous fossils or petrifications, are so many direct evidences of the truth of the scripture account of the formation of the earth; and they might be used as proofs of its author having been inspired, because the mineralogical facts discovered by modern naturalists were unknown to the sacred historian. Even the periods of time, the six days of the Mosaic description, are not inconsistent with our theories of the earth. There are, indeed, many physical considerations which render it probable, that the motions

of the earth may have been slower during the time of its formation, than after it was formed ; and consequently, that the day, or period between morning and evening, may have then been indefinitely longer than it is at present. If such a hypothesis is at all admissible, it will go far in supporting the opinion, which has long been maintained on this subject by many of the ablest and most learned Scripture critics. The deluge, one of the grandest natural events described in the Bible, is equally confirmed with regard to its extent, and the period of its occurrence, by a careful study of the various phenomena observed on and near the earth's surface. The age of the human race, also a most important inquiry, is satisfactorily determined by an appeal to natural appearances ; and the pretended great antiquity of some nations, so much insisted on by certain philosophers, is thereby shewn to be entirely unfounded.—*Professor Jameson's Preface to Cuvier's Theory of the Earth.*

The *sands* of the Lybian desert, driven by the west winds, have left no lands capable of tillage on any parts of the western banks of the Nile, not sheltered by mountains. The encroachment of these *sands* on soils, which were formerly inhabited and cultivated, is evidently seen. M. Denon informs us, in the account of his *Travels in Lower and Upper Egypt*, that summits of the *ruins* of ancient cities, buried under these *sands*, still appear externally ; and that, but for a ridge of mountains called the *Lybian chain*, which borders the left bank of the Nile, and forms, in the parts where it rises, a barrier against the invasion of these *sands*, the shores of the river, on that side, would long since have ceased to be habitable. “ Nothing can be more melancholy,” says this traveller, “ than to walk over villages swallowed up by the sand of the desert, to trample under foot their

roofs, to strike against the summits of their minarets, to reflect, that yonder were cultivated fields, that there grew trees, that here were even the dwellings of men, and that all has vanished."

If, then, our *continents* were as *ancient* as has been pretended, no traces of the habitation of man would appear on any part of the western bank of the Nile, which is exposed to this scourge of the *sands* of the desert. The existence, therefore, of such monuments attest the successive progress of the encroachments of the sand; and these parts of the bank, formerly inhabited, will for ever remain arid and waste. Thus the great population of Egypt, announced by the vast and numerous ruins of its cities, was in great part due to a cause of fertility which no longer exists, and to which sufficient attention has not been given. The *sands* of the desert were formerly remote from Egypt; the *Oases*, or habitable spots, still appearing in the midst of the sands, being the remains of the soils formerly extending the whole way to the Nile; but these *sands*, transported hither by the western winds, have overwhelmed and buried this extensive tract, and doomed to sterility a land which was once remarkable for its fruitfulness.

It is therefore not solely to her revolutions and changes of sovereigns, that Egypt owes the loss of her ancient splendour; it is also to her having been thus irrecoverably deprived of a tract of land, by which, before the *sands* of the desert had covered it, and caused it to disappear, her wants had been abundantly supplied. Now, if we fix our attention on this fact, and reflect on the consequences which would have attended it, if thousands, or only some hundreds of centuries had elapsed since our continents first existed above the level of the sea, does it not evidently appear, that all the country, on the west of the Nile, would have been buried under this sand

before the erection of the cities of ancient Egypt, how *remote* soever that period may be supposed ; and that, in a country so long afflicted with sterility, no idea would ever have been formed of constructing such vast and numerous edifices ? When these cities, indeed, were built, another cause concurred in favouring their prosperity. The navigation of the Red Sea, was not then attended with any danger on the coasts : all its ports, now nearly blocked up with *reefs* of *coral*, had a safe and easy access ; the vessels laden with merchandize and provisions could enter them and depart, without risk of being wrecked on these shoals, which have risen since that time, and are still increasing in extent.

The defects of the present government of Egypt, and the discovery of the passage from Europe to India, round the Cape of Good Hope, are therefore not the only causes of the present state of decline of this country. If the *sands* of the desert had not invaded the bordering lands on the west, if the work of the *sea polypi*, in the Red Sea, had not rendered dangerous the access to its coasts and to its ports, and even filled up some of the latter ; the population of Egypt and the adjacent countries, together with their product, would alone have sufficed to maintain them in a state of prosperity and abundance. But now, though the passage to India by the Cape of Good Hope should cease to exist, though the political advantages which Egypt enjoyed during the brilliant period of Thebes and Memphis, should be re-established, she could never again attain the same degree of splendour.

Thus the *reefs* of *coral* which had been raised in the Red Sea, on the east of Egypt, and the *sands* of the desert which invade it on the west, concur in attesting this truth : That our continents are not of

a more remote *antiquity*, than has been assigned to them by the sacred historian in the book of Genesis, from the great era of the deluge."—*De Luc, cited in the Appendix to Cuvier's Theory of the Earth, by Professor Jameson, p. 216.*

Thus all the nations, which possess any records or ancient traditions, uniformly declare, that they have been recently renewed after a grand revolution of nature. This concurrence of historical and traditionary testimonies, respecting a comparatively recent renewal of the human race, and their agreement with the proofs that are furnished by the operations of nature, which have been already considered, might certainly warrant us in refraining from the examination of certain equivocal monuments, which have been brought forward by some authors in support of a contrary opinion. But even this examination, to judge of it by some attempts already made, will probably do nothing else, than add some more proofs to that which is furnished by tradition.

I am of opinion, then, with M. Deluc and M. Dolomieu,—That, if there is any circumstance thoroughly established in geology, it is, that the crust of our globe has been subjected to a great and sudden revolution, the epoch of which cannot be dated much farther back than five or six thousand years ago; that this revolution had buried all the countries, which were before inhabited by men, and by the other animals that are now best known; that the same revolution had laid dry the bed of the last ocean, which now forms all the countries at present inhabited; that the small number of individuals of men and other animals, that escaped from the effects of that great revolution, have since propagated and spread over the lands then newly laid dry; and consequently, that the human race has only resumed a progressive state of improvement

since that epoch, by forming established societies, raising monuments, collecting natural facts, and constructing systems of science and of learning.—*Cuvier's Theory of the Earth, translated by Kerr.*

The Hebrew, being the language of a nomadic people who possessed few arts, and still less of science, cannot be supposed to contain many abstract or general terms, nor does it in point of fact: consequently, when the Hebrew writers are in want of general expressions, they always adopt particular terms in a tropical sense. And this is the way, in which general expressions were originally formed in all languages. The word period itself, in its first application to time, signified a single circuit of the sun. Therefore, if the author of the cosmogony had intended to describe a succession of periods of indefinite length, he would necessarily have proceeded in this manner, and would have used some word which properly indicated a limited duration in a tropical acceptance. The question which remains is, what particular expressions the Hebrews (and especially Moses himself) were in the habit of applying in this indefinite way; and the fact is, that the word יום indicating *day*, is the very one of which they made choice. It is used indisputably in that sense, in chap. ii. 4. “These are the generations of the heaven and earth, when they were created, *in the day* that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.” It is therefore clear, that the term *day* will bear the sense of an indefinite period, according to the genius of the Hebrew language. That it was actually intended to be so received in this particular place, appears to me fully evident from the context. Those, who do not admit the supernatural intelligence of the author of the Genesis, will yet allow him a great portion of natural sagacity, and good sense, and will certainly acquit him of so pal-

pable an absurdity, as speaking of days in the literal meaning of the word, before the creation of the sun. If this interpretation be allowed, the following series of facts is found to be detailed in the Genesis. 1. That the waters of the ocean for a long time covered the whole earth. 2. That no organized being existed for a long time in this universal ocean. 3. That the water had subsided before the creation of organized beings. 4. That an indefinite period followed, during which the vegetable creation was formed. It is to be remarked, that this part of the creation was effected before the existence of fishes in the sea. 5. That, in the next period, the sea produced locomotive animals. This is the precise meaning of the Hebrew word used in this place, and it was so understood by the LXX. Zoophytes and testacea, are, of course, excluded from this class, and, not being enumerated, must find their place in the era of the creation, which belongs to beings lower in the scale than locomotive animals, viz. that appropriated to vegetables, to which, in fact, zoophytes especially have a strong analogy. The creation of birds is referred to the same epoch with that of aquatic *locomotive animals*. 6. The creation of quadrupeds follows. No reason can be assigned for placing this event later in the series, than the formation of aquatic animals; and, if the statement be confirmed by positive proof, the correctness of the history is so much the more striking. 7. The creation of man was later; than all the above mentioned events.

Let us now try how far these facts can be proved by geological phenomena. 1. That the ocean covered the whole earth, cannot be questioned on any reasonable ground, because many of the highest mountains are stratified; and strata are allowed by all to be deposits, from a state of chemical solution, or mecha-

nical suspension in water. Besides, the rocks of which they consist, often leave a crystalline composition; and crystallization can only have been effected in water. The Huttonians, indeed, pretend that fire was the solvent, but then they find it necessary to assert that the fusion was performed in some hot Tartarus or Pyriphegethon beneath the weight of the whole ocean. 2. That no organized being existed in the universal ocean, is evident from the total want of organic remains in the oldest class of rocks. 3. That the water had subsided before the creation of organized beings, is evident from the primitive rocks occupying the highest situations. Had it been otherwise, they would be found to be enveloped every where in a covering of floetz rocks, or mountainous tracts, equally as in valleys and plains. 4. That, in the next period, organized beings of the simplest kinds were created, is evident from the series of formations, containing these remains, and those of no other creatures. This series begins with the transition rocks, and includes the mountain limestones, and the rocks belonging to the coal formation: in fact, all those strata, which, in South Britain, are found in an inclined position. In the coal formation, we find impressions of vegetable bodies in great abundance, and in the limestones, zoophytes and testacea. 5. That, in the next period, the sea produced locomotive animals, is proved by our finding their remains in the rocks which succeed them, viz. in the first horizontal formations, which in England lie over the inclined. Thus the lyas limestone contains abundance of the remains of fishes, and those large marine animals, which were erroneously supposed to be crocodiles. The remains of birds are so perishable, that we could not expect to find many of them; but Blumenbach, and Faujas St. Fond mention some specimens

of them found in marle slates, together with numerous impressions of fishes, which seem to prove that they began to exist at this era. 6. The remains of quadrupeds are found only in strata which are much more recent than all those above mentioned. 7. That man was created at a later era, than all the above mentioned beings, is proved by a similar method. The reason why no human bones are found even in the newest rocks, is, probaby, that all the rock formations were deposited before the creation of the human species.

I may observe, that modern discoveries in physiology confirm this order of events. Animals only feed on animal and vegetable matter, while vegetable bodies, and probably zoophytes, derive nutriment from mineral substances. It follows, that vegetables must have existed long before the animal creation, in order to prepare a store for the sustenance of the latter. Physiology and geology were equally unknown, at the time when the Genesis was written; and it is certainly a most remarkable circumstance, that we find a detail of facts set down there, which accords so exactly with the results of recent discoveries.

But if this coincidence is surprising in itself, it appears the more so, when we compare the cosmogony of the Hebrews, with the notions on this subject, that prevailed among other nations of antiquity. We find invariably, that all other speculations on this subject, are founded on some fanciful analogy with natural processes, that are daily observed. Thus the Egyptians pretended, that the mud of rivers, acted upon by the solar beams, had generated all animals, including men; as they assured Diodorus, that the mud of the Nile continued to generate rats even in his time. Many of the Greeks imagined, that the world, and all things in it, grew from seeds; and the

celebrated story of the mundane egg, or the egg produced spontaneously in the womb of Erebus, was another childish attempt to explain the origin of the universe, by a loose and fanciful comparison with natural processes. Just of the same character is that of Virgil :

“ Cum Pater omnipotens fœcundis imbribus æther
 “ Conjugis in lætæ gremium descendit, et omnes
 “ Magnus alit vasto diffusus corpore fœtus.”

Nothing of this kind can be found in the Mosaic cosmogony: there is not the smallest attempt to explain the manner in which any thing was produced. For the sense, attributed to “ the Spirit of God moving on the face of the waters,” by Milton and some modern paraphrasts, is altogether forced, and a pollution of the simple and sublime sense of the text. I will conclude by observing, that one single fact seems to me of more importance, than all the other inferences that can be collected from geology, and that is, the proof it affords, that the animal creation really had a beginning. All men naturally feel a great difficulty in believing, that any miracle, that is, any event contrary to the course of their experience, and to the usual tenour of nature, has ever taken place. In recognizing, however, the proof that there was a time when man had no existence, and that, at some particular time, he began to exist, or was created, we receive evidence of so great a miracle, that all those related in the Old and New Testament, appear quite trifles in comparison with it; and it being once granted that so wonderful an event as the former ever took place, the latter must be admitted as capable of satisfactory proof, due testimony being afforded in their favour. Now this great point has

been, as I apprehend, incontestibly established by geological researches.—*J. C. Pritchard, M. D. Philosophical Magazine, xlv. 286.*

Bristol, Oct. 10, 1815.

III.

MISCELLANEOUS EXTRACTS.

IMPROPRIETY OF EXCLUDING VISITORS BY SAYING, "NOT AT HOME."—Let us first, according to the well known axiom of morality, put ourselves in the place of the person whom this answer excludes. It seldom happens but that he is able, if he be in possession of any discernment, to discover with tolerable accuracy, whether the answer he receives be true or false. But let us suppose only, that we vehemently suspect the truth. It is not intended to keep us in ignorance of the existence of such a practice. He that adopts it, is willing to avow in general terms, that such is his system, or he makes out a case for himself, much less favourable than I was making out for him. The visitor, then, who receives this answer, feels, in spite of himself, a contempt for the prevarication of the person he visits. I appeal to the feelings of every man in the situation I have described, and I have no doubt that he will feel this to be their true state in the first instance; however he may have a set of sophistical reasonings at hand, by which he may in a few minutes reason down the first movements of indignation. He feels, that the trouble he

has taken, and the civility he intended, entitled him at least to truth in return.

Having put ourselves in the place of the visitor, let us next put ourselves in the place of the poor despised servant. Let us suppose that we are ourselves destined, as sons or husbands, to give this answer, that our father or our wife is not at home, when he or she is really in the house. Should we not feel our tongues contaminated with the base plebeian lie? Would it be a sufficient opiate to our consciences to say, that "such is the practice, and it is well understood?" It never can be understood; its very intention is not to be understood. We say that "we have certain arguments, that prove the practice to be innocent." Are servants only competent to understand these arguments? Surely we ought best to be able to understand our own arguments, and yet we shrink with abhorrence from the idea of personally acting upon them. Whatever sophistry we may have to excuse our error, nothing is more certain, than that our servants understand the lesson, we teach them, to be a lie. It is accompanied by all the retinue of falsehood. Before it can be gracefully practised, the servant must be no mean proficient in the mysteries of hypocrisy. By the easy impudence with which it is uttered, he best answers the purpose of his master, or, in other words, the purpose of deceit. By the easy impudence with which it is uttered, he best stifles the upbraidings of his own mind, and conceals from others the shame imposed upon him by his despotic taskmaster. Before this can be sufficiently done, he must have discarded the ingenuous frankness, by means of which the thoughts find easy commerce with the tongue, and the clear and undisguised countenance, which ought to be the faithful mirror of the mind. Do you think, when he has learned this de-

generate lesson in one instance, that it will produce no unfavourable effects upon his general conduct? Surely, if we will practise vice, we ought at least to have the magnanimity to practise it in person, not, coward-like, corrupt the principles of another, and oblige him to do that, which we have not the honesty to dare to do for ourselves. But it is said, that this lie is necessary, and that the intercourse of human society cannot be carried on without it. What! is it not as easy to say "I am engaged," or "indisposed," or as the case may happen, as "I am not at home?" Are these answers more insulting, than the universally suspected answer, the notorious hypocrisy, of "I am not at home?" The purpose, indeed, for which this answer is usually employed, is a deceit of another kind. Every man has, in the catalogue of his acquaintance, some that he particularly loves, and others to whom he is indifferent, or perhaps worse than indifferent. This answer leaves the latter to suppose, if they please, that they are in the class of the former. And what is the benefit to result from this indiscriminate, undistinguishing manner of treating our neighbours. Whatever benefit it be, it no doubt exists in considerable vigour in the present state of polished society, where forms perpetually intrude to cut off all intercourse between the feelings of mankind; and I can scarcely tell a man on the one hand, that "I esteem his character, and honour his virtues," or, on the other, that he is fallen into an error, which will be of prejudicial consequence to him, without trampling upon all the barriers of politeness. But is all this right? Is not the esteem or the disapprobation of others among the most powerful incentives to virtue, or punishments of vice? Can we ever understand virtue and vice, half so well as we otherwise should, if we be unacquainted with the feelings of our neighbours respecting

them? If there be in the list of our acquaintance any person, whom we particularly dislike; it usually happens, that it is for some moral fault that we perceive, or think we perceive, in him. Why should he be kept in ignorance of our opinion respecting him, and prevented from the opportunity either of amendment or vindication? If he be too wise or too foolish, too virtuous, or too vicious for us, why should he not be ingenuously told of his mistake, in his intended kindness to us, rather than be suffered to find it out by six months' inquiry from our servants.

This leads to yet one more argument in favour of this disingenuous practice. We are told "there is no other way by which we can rid ourselves of disagreeable acquaintance." How long shall this be one of the effects of polished society, to persuade us that we are incapable of doing the most trivial offices for ourselves? You may as well tell me "that it is a matter of indispensable necessity to have a valet to put on my stockings." In reality, the existence of these troublesome visitors, is owing to the hypocrisy of politeness. It is, that we wear the same indiscriminate smile, the same appearance of cordiality and complacency to all our acquaintance. Ought we to do this? Are virtue and excellence entitled to no distinctions? For the trouble of these impertinent visits we may thank ourselves. If we practised no deceit, if we assumed no atom of cordiality and esteem we did not feel, we should be little pestered with these buzzing intruders. But one species of falsehood, involves us in another; and he, that pleads for these lying answers to our visitors, in reality pleads the cause of a cowardice that dares not deny to vice the distinction and kindness, that are exclusively due to virtue.

The man, who acted upon this system, would be

very far removed from a cynic. The conduct of men, formed upon the fashionable system, is a perpetual contradiction. At one moment, they fawn upon us with a servility, that dishonours the dignity of man ; and, at another, treat us with a neglect, a sarcastic insolence, and a supercilious disdain, that are felt as the severest cruelty by him, who has not the firmness to regard them with neglect. The conduct of the genuine moralist is equable and uniform. He loves all mankind; he desires the benefit of all, and this love, and this desire, are legible in his conduct. Does he remind us of our faults? It is with no mixture of asperity, of selfish disdain, and insolent superiority ; of consequence, it is scarcely possible he should wound. Few, indeed, are those effeminate valetudinarians, who recoil from the advice, when they distinguish the motive. But were it otherwise, the injury is nothing. Those who feel themselves incapable of suffering the most benevolent plain dealing, would derive least benefit from the prescription, and they avoid the physician. Thus is he delivered, without harshness, hypocrisy, and deceit, from those whose intercourse he had least reason to desire ; and, the more his character is understood, the more his acquaintance will be select, his company being chiefly sought by the ingenuous, the well-disposed, and those who are desirous of improvement.—*Godwin's Political Justice*, i. 271.

• PROFANE SWEARING.—Swearing and irreverently using the name of God in common discourse and converse, is another abuse of the tongue ; to which I might add vehement asseverations upon slight and trivial occasions. I do not deny, but in a matter of weight and moment, which will bear out such attestation, and where belief will not be obtained with-

out them,—and yet it may much import the hearer or speaker that his words be believed, or where the hearer would not otherwise think the matter so momentous or important as indeed it is,—protestations, and asseverations, yea oaths, may lawfully be used; but to call God to witness to an untruth, or a lie perhaps, or to appeal to him upon every trivial occasion in common discourse, customarily, without any consideration of what we say, is one of the highest indignities and affronts that can be offered to him, being a sin to which there is no temptation; for it is so far from gaining belief, (which is the only thing that can with any shew of reason be pleaded for it,) that it rather creates diffidence and distrust; for as *multa fidem promissa levant*, so, *multà juramenta* too; it being become a proverb “*he that will swear, will lie*; and good reason there is for it, for he that scruples not the breach of one of God’s commands, is not likely to make conscience of violation of another.—*Ray’s Wisdom of God in the Creation*, part ii. *apud finem*.

DUELLING.—Such is the necessary imperfection of human laws, that many private injuries are perpetrated, of which they take no cognizance; but, if these were allowed to be punished by the individual against whom they are committed, every man would be judge and executioner in his own cause, and universal anarchy would immediately follow. The laws, therefore, by which this practice is prohibited, ought to be held more sacred than any other; and the violation of them is so far from being necessary to prevent an imputation of cowardice, that they are enforced even among those in whom cowardice is punished with death, by the following clause in the nineteenth article of war. “Nor shall any officer, or

“ soldier, upbraid another for refusing a challenge, since, according to these our orders, they do but the duty of soldiers, who ought to subject themselves to discipline : and we do acquit and discharge all men who have quarrels offered, and challenges sent to them, of all disgrace or opinion of disadvantage in their obedience hereunto : and whoever shall upbraid them, or offend in this case, shall be punished as a challenger.” It is to be presumed, that, of this clause, no gentleman in the army is ignorant ; and those who, by the arrogance of their folly, labour to render it ineffectual, should, as enemies to their country, be driven out of it with detestation and contempt.—*Hawkesworth’s Adventurer*, No. lxx.

It is astonishing, that the murderous practice of duelling, which you so justly condemn, should continue so long in vogue. Formerly, when duels were used to determine law-suits, from an opinion that Providence would, in every instance, favour truth and right with victory, they were excusable. At present, they decide nothing. A man says something, which another tells him is a lie. They fight ; but whichever is killed, the point in dispute remains unsettled. To this purpose they have a pleasant little story here. A gentleman in a coffeehouse desired another to sit further from him. Why so ? Because, Sir, you stink. That is an affront, and you must fight me. I will fight you, if you insist upon it ; but I do not see how that will mend the matter. For if you kill me, I shall stink too ; and if I kill you, you will stink, if possible, worse than you do at present. How can such miserable sinners as we, entertain so much pride, as to conceive that every offence against our imagined honour merits *death* ? These petty princes in their own opinion, would call that sovereign a tyrant, who

should put one of them to death, for a little uncivil language, though pointed at his sacred person: Yet every one makes himself judge in his own cause, condemns the offender without a jury, and undertakes himself to be the executioner.—*Franklin's Correspondence*, i. 151.

It may be proper, in this place, to bestow a moment's consideration upon the trite, but very important case of duelling. A very short reflection will suffice to set it in its true light. This detestable practice was originally invented by barbarians, for the gratification of revenge. It was probably, at that time, thought a very happy project for reconciling the odiousness of malignity with the gallantry of courage. But, in this light, it is now generally given up. Men of the best understanding, who lend it their sanction, are unwillingly induced to do so, and engage in single combat, merely that their reputation may sustain no slander. Which of these two actions is the truest test of courage, the engaging in a practice which our judgment disapproves, because we cannot submit to the consequences of following that judgment; or the doing what we believe to be right, and cheerfully encountering all the consequences that may be annexed to the practice of virtue? With what patience can a man of virtue think of cutting off the life of a fellow-mortal, or of putting an abrupt close to all the generous projects he may himself conceive for the benefit of others, merely because he has not firmness enough to awe impertinence and falsehood into silence? “But the refusing of a duel is an ambiguous action, Cowards may pretend principle, to shelter themselves from a danger they dare not meet.” This is partly true, and partly false. There are few actions, indeed, that are not ambiguous; or that, with the same general outline, may not proceed from different motives.

But the manner of doing them, will sufficiently shew the principle from which they spring. He, that would break through an universally received custom, because he believes it to be wrong, must no doubt arm himself with fortitude. The point in which we chiefly fail, is in not accurately understanding our own intentions, and taking care beforehand to free ourselves from any alloy of weakness and error. He, who comes forward with no other idea in his mind but that of rectitude, and who expresses, with the simplicity and firmness which full conviction never fails to inspire, the views with which he is impressed, is in no danger of being mistaken for a coward. If he hesitate, it is because he has not an idea, perfectly clear, of the sentiment he intends to convey. If he be in any degree embarrassed, it is because he has not a feeling sufficiently generous and intrepid, of the guilt of the action in which he is pressed to engage. If there be any meaning in courage, its first ingredient must be, the daring to speak the truth at all times, to all persons, and in every possible situation. What is it but the want of courage, that should prevent me from saying, "Sir, I ought to refuse your challenge.—What I ought to do, that I dare do. Have I injured you? I will readily, and without compulsion, repair my injustice to the uttermost mite. Have you misconstrued me? State to me the particulars, and doubt not that what is true, I will make appear to be true. Thus far I will go. But, though I should be branded for a coward by all mankind, I will not repair to a scene of deliberate murder. I will not do an act, that I know to be flagitious. I will exercise my judgment upon every proposition that comes before me; the dictates of that judgment I will speak; and upon them I will form my conduct." He that holds this language, with a countenance in unison

with his words, will never be suspected of acting from the impulse of fear.—*Godwin's Political Justice*, i. 94.

SERIOUS CHALLENGE, OR LETTER, OF MR. T. TO ONE OF HIS FRIENDS.—Sir, to-morrow, at noon, in the Bois de Boulogne, you will give me satisfaction for the look, which you cast on me yesterday. To-morrow, Sir, that is to say, when time shall have given you the leisure to repent, and me that of being appeased, and shall leave neither of us the excuse of a first transport of passion, we will cut each other's throats, if you please, in cool blood. I believe you to be too brave to testify regret for the fault you have committed; and, on my side, I think *too nobly*, not to wash it out in your blood or in my own. You think rightly, that in evincing to me disrespect, you have given me a right over your life, or have acquired a right over mine. I should be far from pardoning you, even if you confessed to me that you acted inconsiderately: I should only add contempt to resentment. But, if you succeed in killing me, I esteem you for it the more, by anticipation, and not only pardon you your offence, but my death; for, in reality, I entertain for you neither hatred nor disdain; and would not confer on many others the honour that I do you. Our fathers have instructed us, that there are a thousand occasions in life, in which we cannot dispense with killing our best friend. I hope you will believe them on their word; and that, without hating each other, we shall not the less be each other's assassins. To plunge our sword in the bosom of an enemy to our country, is a low and vulgar action; we have the greatest inducements to incite us to it; but to kill a fellow-citizen, a friend, for the slightest offence; *this, this, according to the feudal code of the Germans, our worthy ancestors,* is

the height of grandeur and magnanimity. You have the place; and hour. Be punctual. T.—*Baron De Grimm's Correspondence.*

SUICIDE.—This reasoning will explain to us the long disputed case of suicide. “Have I a right, under any circumstances, to destroy myself, in order to escape from pain or disgrace?” Probably not. It is, perhaps, impossible to imagine a situation, that shall exclude the possibility of future life, vigour, and usefulness. The motive assigned for escape is eminently trivial; to avoid pain, which is a small inconvenience; or disgrace, which is an imaginary evil. The examples of fortitude, in enduring them, if there were no other consideration, would probably afford a better motive for continuing to live. “The difficulty is, to decide, in any instance, whether the recourse to a voluntary death can overbalance the usefulness, I may exert in twenty or thirty years of additional life. But surely it would be precipitate to decide that there is no such instance*.”—*Godwin's Political Justice*, i. 92.

I cannot, I confess, discover how the practice of suicide can be justified, upon any principle, except upon that of downright atheism. If we suppose a good Providence to govern the world, the consequence is undeniable, that we must entirely rely upon it. If we imagine an evil one to prevail, what chance is there of finding that happiness in another scene, which we have in vain sought for in this? The same malevolent-omnipotence can as easily pursue us in the next remove, as persecute us in this our first station. Upon the whole, prudence strongly forbids so hazardous

* The above citation, though not sufficiently decisive, is given to shew how indefensible the act of suicide appears, even upon a system, which excludes, as much as possible, all religious considerations.

an experiment, as that of being our own executioners. We know the worst that can happen in supporting life, under all its most wretched circumstances; and, if we should be mistaken in thinking it our duty to endure a load, which in truth we may securely lay down, it is an error extremely limited in its consequences. They cannot extend beyond this present existence, and possibly may end much earlier: whereas, no mortal can, with the least degree of assurance, pronounce what may not be the effects of acting agreeably to the contrary opinion.—*Fitzosborne's Letters*, No. 22.

PRAYER OF SIR WILLIAM JONES.—Eternal and incomprehensible *Mind*, who, by thy boundless *power*, before time began, createdst innumerable *worlds* for thy *glory*, and innumerable orders of *beings* for their *happiness*, which thy infinite *goodness* prompted thee to desire, and thy infinite wisdom enabled thee to know! We, thy *creatures*, vanish into nothing before thy supreme majesty; we hourly feel our *weakness*; we daily bewail our *vices*; we continually acknowledge our *folly*; thee only we *adore*, with awful veneration; thee we *thank* with the most fervent zeal; thee we *praise* with astonishment and rapture; to thy *power* we humbly submit; of thy *goodness* we devoutly implore protection; on thy *wisdom* we firmly and cheerfully rely. We do but open our *eyes*, and instantly we perceive thy divine existence; we do but exert our *reason*, and in a moment we discover thy divine *attributes*: but our *eyes* could not behold thy *splendour*, nor could our *minds* comprehend thy divine *essence*; we *see* thee *only* through thy stupendous and all-perfect *works*, we *know* thee *only* by that ray of sacred light, which it has pleased thee to reveal. Nevertheless, if creatures too *ignorant* to *conceive*, and

too *depraved* to *pursue*, the means of their own happiness, may, without presumption, express their wants to their Creator, let us humbly supplicate thee to remove from us that *evil*, which thou hast permitted for a *time* to exist, that the *ultimate good* of all may be complete ; and to secure us from that *vice*, which thou sufferest to spread snares around us, that the triumph of virtue may be more conspicuous. Irradiate our minds with all *useful truth* ; instil into our hearts a spirit of *general benevolence* ; give *understanding* to the foolish ; *meekness* to the proud ; *temperance* to the dissolute ; *fortitude* to the feeble-hearted ; *hope* to the desponding ; *faith* to the unbelieving ; *diligence* to the slothful ; *patience* to those who are in *pain* ; and thy celestial aid to those who are in *danger* ; comfort the *afflicted* ; relieve the *distressed* : supply the *hungry* with salutary food, and the *thirsty* with a plentiful stream. Impute not our *doubts* to *indifference*, nor our *slowness of belief* to *hardness of heart* ; but be indulgent to our *imperfect natures*, and supply our *imperfections* by thy *heavenly favour*. “ Suffer not, we “ anxiously pray, suffer not *oppression* to prevail over “ *innocence*, nor the *might* of the *avenger* over the “ *weakness* of the *just*.”

Whenever we address thee in our retirement from the vanities of the world, if our prayers are *foolish*, *pity* us ; if *presumptuous*, *pardon* us ; if *acceptable* to thee, grant them, all-powerful God, grant them : and as, with our *living* voice, and with our *dying* lips, we will express our submission to thy *decrees*, adore thy *providence*, and bless thy *dispensations* ; so, in all *future* states, to which we reverently hope thy *goodness* will raise us, grant that we may continue *praising*, *admiring*, *venerating*, *worshipping* thee more and more, through *worlds* without *number*, and *ages* without

end! Jan. 1, 1782.—*Lord Teignmouth's Life of Sir William Jones*, p. 271.

PRAYER OF LORD BACON.—Most gracious Lord God, my merciful Father, my Creator, my Redeemer, my Comforter! thou soundest and searchest the depths and secrets of all hearts; thou acknowledgest the upright; thou judgest the hypocrite; vanity and crooked ways cannot be hid from thee.

Remember, O Lord, how thy servant has walked before thee; remember what I have first sought, and what has been principal in my intentions. I have loved thy assemblies; I have mourned for the divisions of thy church; I have delighted in the brightness of thy sanctuary; I have ever prayed unto thee, that the vine, which thy right hand hath planted in this nation, might have the former and the latter rain; and that it might stretch its branches to the seas, and to the floods. The state and bread of the poor and oppressed have been precious in my eyes: I have hated all cruelty and hardness of heart; I have, though a despised weed, endeavoured to procure the good of all men. If any have been my enemies, I thought not of them, neither has the sun gone down upon my displeasure: but I have been as a dove, free from superfluity of maliciousness. Thy creatures have been my books, but thy Scriptures much more so. I have sought thee in the courts, the fields, and the gardens; but I have found thee in thy temples.

Thousands have been my sins, and ten thousands my transgressions: but thy sanctifications have remained with me; and my heart, through thy grace, hath been an unquenched coal upon thine altar.

O Lord, my strength! I have, from my youth, met with thee in all thy ways; in thy fatherly compassions, in thy merciful chastisements, and in thy

most visible providences. As thy favours have increased upon me, so have thy corrections; as my worldly blessings were exalted, so secret darts from thee have pierced me; and when I have ascended before man, I have descended in humiliation before thee. And now, when I have been thinking most of peace and honour, thy hand is heavy upon me, and has humbled me according to thy former lovingkindness, keeping me still in thy fatherly school, not as a bastard, but as a child. Just are thy judgments upon me for my sins, which are more in number than the sands of the sea, but which have no proportion to thy mercies. Besides my innumerable sins, I confess before thee, that I am a debtor to thee for the gracious talent of thy gifts and graces; which I have neither put into a napkin, nor placed, as I ought, with exchangers, where it might have made best profit; but I have mispent it in things for which I was least fit: so I may truly say, my soul has been a stranger in the course of my pilgrimage. Be merciful unto me, O Lord, for my Saviour's sake, and receive me into thy bosom, or guide me in thy ways*.

* These prayers are inserted merely as specimens of the devotional meditations of two of the most distinguished characters in the annals of literature and science; and not as models of prayer, or even as including the usual topics of private devotion.

The first part of the memoirs is devoted to a description of the author's early life and education. He mentions his birth in the year 1715, and his education at the University of Cambridge. He then describes his travels in France, Italy, and Germany, and his acquaintance with several of the most distinguished men of the age.

The second part of the memoirs is devoted to a description of the author's political and literary career. He mentions his appointment to the office of Secretary of State, and his subsequent promotion to the office of Secretary of War. He also mentions his acquaintance with several of the most distinguished men of the age, and his participation in several of the most important events of the reign of George II.

The third part of the memoirs is devoted to a description of the author's private life and his views on various subjects. He mentions his marriage, and his acquaintance with several of the most distinguished women of the age. He also mentions his views on various subjects, and his participation in several of the most important events of the reign of George II.

The fourth part of the memoirs is devoted to a description of the author's later life and his views on various subjects. He mentions his retirement from public life, and his subsequent residence in the country. He also mentions his views on various subjects, and his participation in several of the most important events of the reign of George II.

The fifth part of the memoirs is devoted to a description of the author's death and his burial. He mentions his death in the year 1773, and his burial in the church of St. Martin's in the Strand.

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